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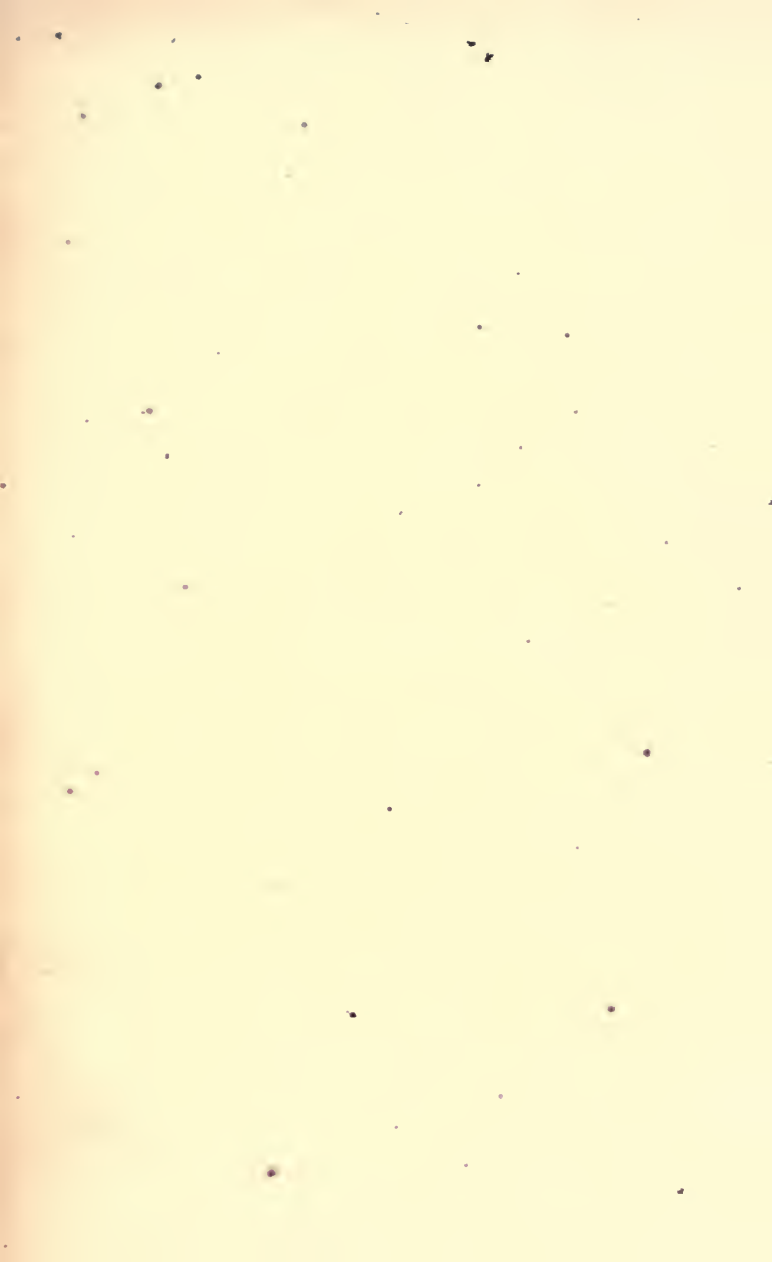
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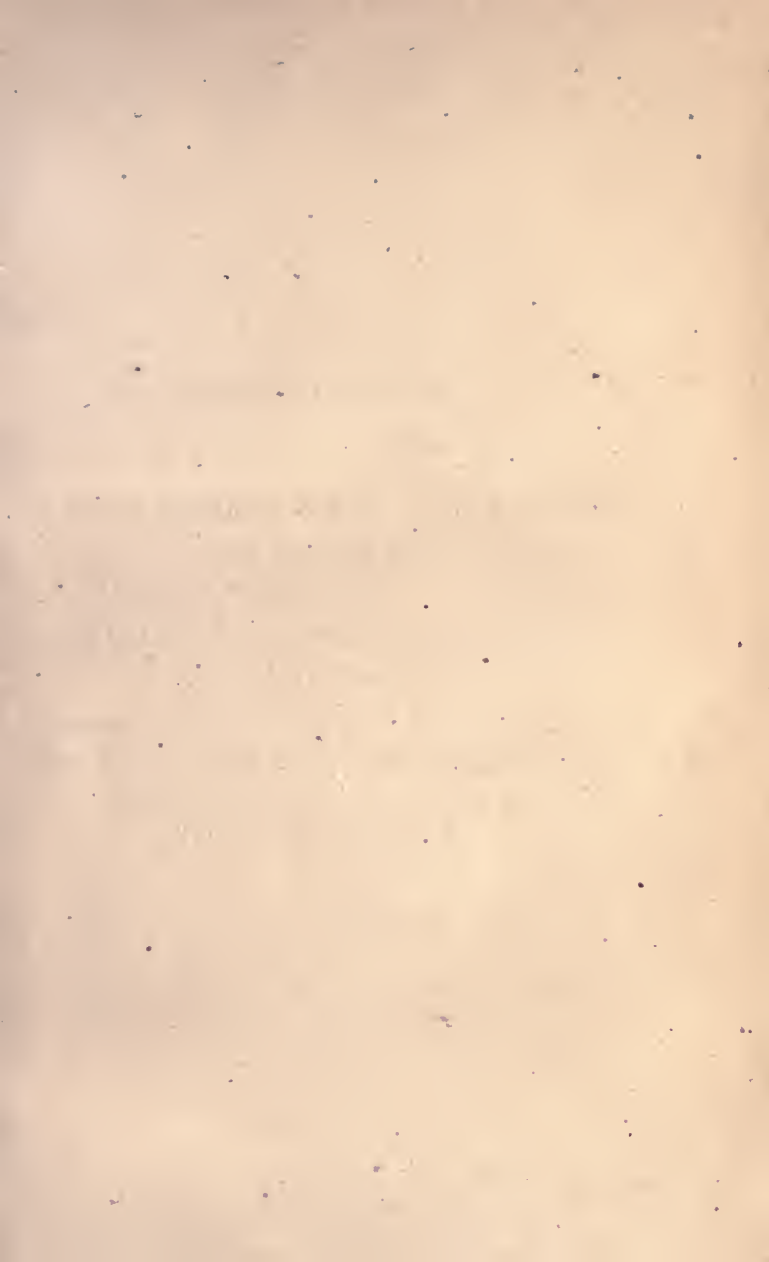
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ROUNDHEARTS

AND OTHER STORIES.

By Mrs Sidney S. Harris

THE AUTHOR OF

"Rutledge," "Sutherlands," "St. Philip's," "Frank Warrington,"
"Louie's Last Term at St. Mary's," etc.

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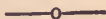
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ROUNDHEARTS.

CHAPTER I.

RECESS.



ROUNDHEARTS?" said Jerry, interrogatively.

"Yes, *roundhearts*," said Ap, emphatically, as he swung himself up on the fence beside Jerry, and balanced his dinner-kettle on the gate-post, having jammed the cover down in a way that did not look well for Jerry's hopes of sharing the contents. There was a pause, during which Ap ate steadily and comfortably the round

brown cake, with its scalloped edges, that he held in his hand, and during which Jerry looked hungrily on, holding no cake of any kind in his hand, and not having any immediate prospect of so holding any.

Poor little Jerry! It was nothing new for him to come breakfastless to school; and dinnerless, to watch the other children empty their well-filled kettles, hardly throwing him a crumb. His lazy, drunken aunt was seldom out of bed when he started for school; and though he always went down into the cellar and tried to hunt up a crust of bread or a scrap of meat to appease the appetite that gnawed within, he very often had no better luck than, we are told, old Mother Hubbard had on that renowned visit of hers to the cupboard.

Very bare was the cupboard generally in Chary Wilson's old tumble-down house,

and very bare was the cellar where little Jerry hunted hungrily for his breakfast. Little fire there was in winter, and little food in summer in that house; but of want, and drunkenness, and profanity, and sin, there was plenty. No one that knew the house he came from could wonder that Jerry Wilson looked half-starved and haggard, and that his clothes hung ragged and tattered about him. No one could wonder that he was at the foot of the lowest class in school, and that he was the butt of his companions for his stupidity and slowness. Though a great many of these ill-cared-for and ignorant negro children who formed the Laurel Hollow School had need of compassion and kindness, none had so great need of them as Jerry, and none perhaps received less. There was something so dull and lifeless about him that the children turned

away from him; and his intelligence was not of an order to attract the attention of the ladies and gentlemen who occasionally visited the school, nor enlist the interest of those who had the teaching of him. Poor little Jerry!

Ap, on the contrary, was quite the show-boy of the school—bright, quick-witted, and intelligent. His mother was the dairy-woman at Squire Stoughtenborough's farm; and being a thrifty, industrious woman, she managed to keep this, her only boy, well dressed and respectable-looking, and her little cottage in good repair, and her little garden in good order. She had great hopes for Absalom (familiarily known as Ap), and often told him she meant to make something worth having of him; she said he should have as much learning as any of the white boys, and as good a chance to

get ahead as any lad in the village. Ap took this in with much intelligence; and it had the effect, in conjunction with his nice clothes and smart way of learning his lessons, of making him consider himself a very important young person, and quite the hero of the colored school.

Mrs. Rodman, the teacher, had perhaps a different view of the matter.

The day on which Ap ate his round-heart with so much relish on the gate-post, and Jerry looked on with so much hungry longing, was a bright, pleasant, sunshiny Friday in July. The trees and lilac-bushes that surrounded the little school-house were fresh and green, for there had been a heavy shower the night before, and nothing in all the country round had as yet begun to look dried and shrivelled. The fields were beautiful to

look at. The grass on the plot in front of the door was quite as well preserved as grass in the neighborhood of school-houses ever is. Twenty-four pair of emphatic little feet trampling over it did not tend to encourage it in an erect attitude; it lay down irregularly and tangledly, but very submissively, and was still very green. At present, Janey Martin, Clary Sanders, and Lucy Richardson were rolling over it and eating their bread and butter in quiet enjoyment of the noonday intermission.

Mrs. Rodman, watching them all from the school-room window, saw Jerry look uneasily at them; but they were girls, and girls laugh so hatefully when they do laugh! So Jerry didn't ask them for any of their bread and butter, but watched Ap as if all his hopes hung on him. Ap's roundheart disappeared soon, and then

Ap unscrewed the lid of his kettle and took out another; Jerry leaned anxiously forward and looked into the kettle too. After Ap took that one out there were two more whole ones left in it; he screwed the lid down again and went on eating. He couldn't be very hungry, Jerry thought; he had had the drumstick and wing of a chicken, and a great slice of apple-pie, before he began on the roundhearts. Just at that moment several of the boys who were playing horse down the road shouted out to Ap to come and play; he got down from the gate, and cramming the roundheart into his mouth, turned away and was going towards them slowly, when Jerry said hurriedly and huskily, and very low:

"I say, Ap, I wish you'd let me have a bite o' one of them; you don't want 'em all, you know?"

“Don’t I, now? I’d like to know why I don’t! And if I didn’t, I wouldn’t be any ways likely to give ’em to such a good-for-nothing loafer as you are. Bring your own dinner if you’re hungry; you shan’t have any o’ mine.”

Ap called this out in a loud tone—so loud indeed that the girls on the grass heard it very plainly, and stopped talking and listened; and Jerry dropped his eyes in shame and turned his back upon them. The boys down the road shouted again for Ap; so kicking the gate open with one foot, he dashed through it, and leaving his kettle still hanging on the post, he ran at the top of his speed towards them. After he joined them, their game led them still further away, and they soon disappeared into the woods that skirted the road.

Jerry stood perfectly still for several

minutes after they were out of sight; he was so wretched he did not want to follow them, he was so weak and faint he did not want to run, and so ashamed and angry he did not want to go near anybody. After a while he sat down on the grass outside the fence, and began to toss the pebbles that lay within his reach from the path into the road.

Now, he hated Ap; he thought how ugly, and mean, and stingy he was; how, if he was strong and big, he would catch him by the throat and throw him down, and kick him *so*! Oh, till he was sore all over. Hateful, mean, stingy! And Jerry ground his teeth and clenched his fist.

"I hate him; yes, I hate him."

For a long while he lay there, tossing the pebbles or pulling up the grass beside him; the girls had finished their bread and

butter, and had gone off to play; he heard their merry laughing voices half-way up the hill behind the school-house; the boys were still in the woods down the road; he was quite alone. The wicked thoughts of anger and revenge that had kept him company since Ap's insulting answer did not go away; but other wicked thoughts crept in to keep *them* company.

The kettle hung within his reach. What was to hinder him from taking those two cakes that were in it? Who would know he did it? If Ap accused him, who could prove he had done it? There was nobody within sight; nobody could prove it; they might think the girls had done it; or very likely Ap would never miss them.

And he was so hungry! The smell of the apple-pie had driven him almost wild, the sight of the roundhearts had made him

almost sick with longing. He shut his eyes and turned his face down on the grass, but he couldn't get rid of the thought, he couldn't get the roundhearts out of his eyes; turn whichever way he would, shut them ever so tight, the nice, soft, smooth, brown cakes would be before him—the craving, gnawing hunger would be clamoring within.

He must; he would; he didn't care. He raised up on his elbow and looked stealthily around. All was so still; there wasn't a soul in sight; nobody would know—nobody would ever know.

Just at that moment something stirred the lilac-bushes behind him; he gave a violent start, and looked guiltily around. He felt hot with shame when he saw what it was; it was only Moll, the half-grown black-and-white cat, that had been straying

around the Hollow all summer pelted by the boys, kicked from the doors by the women, teased and chased and mauled by the girls. Jerry alone of all the children never had worried or pelted her; she had often come mewling hungrily to the door at night, and he had let her quietly in, and kept her out of Chary's way, and let her lick the unwashed frying-pan in the chimney-corner, and dig greedily among the pile of clam-shells and fish-bones that lay upon the hearth; and though such scraps as were to be found there, and an occasional cold potato, and the freedom of the cellar, were the only privileges that a residence at Chary Wilson's could afford her, she seemed inclined to embrace them, and, as far as she could be said to live anywhere, lived there. She prowled around the Hollow all day, however, and nobody

was ever surprised to see her anywhere; so, after the first moment, Jerry was not surprised to see her at his side.

Poor Moll! Was there ever such a dismal ash-cat before! She was nearly out of kittenhood, "tall for her age," gaunt and meagre, with a hollow sinking in about her sides that made one faint to look at her; and a hungry, wistful expression in her eyes that made one positively uncomfortable. All the black in her coat looked rusty and dirty; and for the white, there is no chance of conveying its griminess. But Jerry loved this cat. He liked to have her paws on his arm when he lay curled up on his heap of straw in the garret at night, and to feel the regular motion of her claws as she opened and shut them on his sleeve, purring all the while. Jerry often wondered if she purred all night.

He left her purring when he went to sleep; and when he woke up in the morning, he always found her watching him and purring still.

“Poor old Moll!” he said, looking down at her, and forgetting for a moment all about the roundhearts; “Poor old Moll!”

She purred intelligently and affectionately, and walked up and down beside him, rubbing herself against his legs, and looking up into his face with such a wistful look in her great unhappy eyes.

“Oh, she’s hungry! I know—poor puss—I know,” and the tears rushed into his eyes. Yes, he knew indeed. There was a sympathy between him and Moll that there was between him and no one else, human or feline. That rush of tears weakened the strength of the wicked thoughts. He began to know they were wicked; he began to

remember who it was that put wicked thoughts in children's minds; he remembered what his teacher had said about the way to get rid of them. He did not know the Lord's Prayer very well; he blundered a good deal in it when it came round to him in the Catechism, partly because he did not understand the words it was made of, partly because all the children were looking at him; but the sense of the latter part of it he had somehow got into his head. It was only yesterday that Mrs. Rodman had made him stand by her desk and repeat it after her, and had told him what "temptation" meant, and what it was to "deliver," and what "evil" was. She had put it all into very simple words, and had said in conclusion:

"Jerry, that's the prayer you must say when you feel wicked—when you want to

do anything bad. It is the devil tries to make you naughty; but God will help you to be good if you say that prayer with all your heart."

So now that Jerry lay there with his hand on poor Moll's head, and the sense of the wickedness he wanted to do so strong in his heart, he vaguely realized that this was temptation—that this was a time to pray. Not understanding them exactly—not fully knowing what it all meant—he said the words over half aloud, only wishing to do right; dimly hoping that God knew all about his trouble, and would help him if he said them. Educated and intelligent children can hardly understand the uncertainty and mistiness of poor Jerry's ideas of right and wrong—the simplicity of his fears of God and trust in Him. Nothing that other children learn had got into his

blundering, stupid, darkened little soul, but the one ray of light that came from knowing that God loved him, and wouldn't let anything bad happen to him as long as he was good and did what was right. So just *to do right* was what Jerry wanted to do, and you may be sure God helped him, through all his ignorance and stupidity.

"I won't; no, no, Moll, I won't," he said. "I know it's bad. I don't mean to. Come, let's go away, Moll."

And grasping her very tightly under his arm, he got up and walked hurriedly away, with an expression almost of fear as he glanced back for an instant at the shiny tin kettle hanging on the gate-post. He gave Moll such a clutch, as he caught the glitter of it in the sunshine, that the poor cat uttered an involuntary mew of pain that brought Jerry to his senses, and he put her

down on the ground quickly, and in an apologetic manner. She seemed to be afraid she'd hurt his feelings, for she rubbed herself against his legs affectionately, and followed him closely as he went on.

He had just seated himself at the school-house door when the bell rang. He was very glad of it; it put the idea of the roundhearts among the impossibilities, and he went into the school-room and took his seat at his end of the long hard bench the youngest class occupied, with a sigh of relief.

Friday afternoon was an exciting time in the Laurel Hollow School; "the ladies" always came then, and about three o'clock Mrs. Rodman arranged them in two long rows on each side of the room; where, with hands folded, feet literally "toeing the mark," and sharp black eyes rolling inqui-

sitively about, contrasting oddly with the forced repose of the bodies they illuminated, the young brigade awaited the arrival of "the ladies." Mrs. Rodman, on this afternoon, perceiving an unusually ungovernable tendency among them, walked authoritatively up and down the line, a slim little whip in her hand, with a view to preserving the order she prided herself upon, until the arrival of the ladies. Not all the terrors of the Inquisition, however, could have prevented the smothered but universal exclamation of, "Here they come!" as a carriage stopped at the gate.

"Children, *will* you be quiet?" And Mrs. Rodman waved her whip significantly, at which they all subsided into the quiet recommended; and you might have heard the smallest pin ever manu-

factured fall upon the thickest carpet ever woven, as Mrs. Danforth came up the path to the school-room door.

CHAPTER II.

POOR MOLL.



HE lady's plan was generally to have a sort of review of the lessons of the week, examining the children upon what they had learned since she was there last; then she would hear them say the Catechism; and lastly, the hymns they knew from the younger ones, and the Collect for the week from the older. It is needless to say the children tried to do their best, and from nine o'clock Monday morning looked forward with anxiety to Friday

afternoon. The rewards, of which this very delightful lady was extremely lavish, were not the sole causes of their assiduity, however. She was so kind and so good, and looked so pretty in her soft muslin dress, and straw-bonnet with its marvellous bright ribbons, and came in such a fine carriage, and drove away so fast, while they all stood watching her, that it is my belief, if she had not given any rewards more tangible than that very sweet smile of hers, and some gentle words of praise, they would have tried very hard to win them and to please her.

Occasionally she brought some of her own children with her; and on this occasion a small boy, keeping tight hold of her dress, and showing a half-developed intention of hiding himself in its folds from all those black eyes, followed her. Indeed,

little Larry was as much afraid of the children as the children were afraid of him, and very often came, and went away, without exchanging anything more familiar with them than a great many shy and curious glances.

After the usual examination, in which Ap distinguished himself by rattling off all the weights and measures in the table-book two degrees faster than usual, and in which poor Jerry did himself more discredit than ever before by his hopeless stupidity and alarm, the lady took her little prayer-book out of her pocket, and began to hear them say the catechism. Very well they knew it, certainly, as far as the mere words went; but whether they had at all grasped the ideas that the words conveyed, seemed a question in her mind just then, for she asked them very searching

and simple things about the Commandments, and did not get very satisfactory replies in all cases. Then she asked them to say the Lord's Prayer. Oh, of course they all knew that, and they all knew "what they desired of God in this prayer;" at least they all said it fast enough.

Indeed, the older ones answered tolerably well most of the questions she put them about this; Mrs. Rodman had taken an infinite amount of pains with them, and they had at least reaped a little benefit from her labors. But it happened that when she said, "Now, children, you tell me you pray God 'that it will please Him to save and defend you in all dangers both of soul and body, and that He will keep you from all sin and wickedness, and from your spiritual enemies, and from everlasting death;' what words of the Lord's

Prayer mean this, do you say? there was an uncertain pause; no one seemed to know.

She looked around inquiringly. "Why, children, can't you tell me that? Can't you tell me what words you must say when any danger, either of soul or body, frightens you; when you want to do something bad; when the devil is tempting you? Think a minute; can't any of you tell me what words our Lord taught His people to say?"

Another pause, during which Ap and the bigger boys looked rather ashamed, and the little ones very much puzzled. But glancing down the double row of unsatisfactory faces, the lady caught a gleam of something like intelligence on Jerry's, and an eager, stammering movement of his lips.

"Well, my little boy, speak. What is it?"

“Lead us not into temptation, but—but—deliver us from evil,” he repeated huskily and slow.

“That’s right,” she said with a quiet smile of approbation. She saw he was miserably frightened at the sound of his own voice and at the wondering eyes turned upon him, so she did not ask him any more questions or take any further notice of him, but she did not lose sight of or forget him; there was something in his face that had struck her with much pity.

The picture reward-card, of course, belonged to Ap; he had had decidedly the best lessons; but just as she was going, the lady called Jerry to her, and opening her purse, gave him a five-cent piece, with some kind words of commendation. Poor Jerry stood holding the bright little coin in his hand, looking hopelessly dull and ungrateful.

"Jerry!" called out Mrs. Rodnian, very much shocked; "why don't you say 'thank you?'"

"Make a bow, stupid," whispered the envious group of children in the rear, and Ap tried to push him forward.

But Jerry, perfectly stunned with it all, could neither command a bow nor a "thank you."

"Oh, no matter this time," said the lady, kindly. "He means 'thank you,' I know."

The children gathered round him in an eager group, almost too much engrossed with his good fortune to watch the carriage drive away; which it did, however, very briskly. Jerry was entirely unsatisfactory upon the question of how he was going to spend it, and put the hand that held it tight in his trousers' pocket, and snubbed all invitations to go shares with sturdy re-

solution. For he had made up his mind very distinctly what to do with his five-pence; half of it in roundhearts, right straight away, and half of it for something to eat to-morrow morning—a little bit of taffy perhaps, some peanuts, and a bolivar. He had never had more than a cent at a time in all his life before, and the times in which he had possessed even that sum he could count up very shortly; so it was no wonder he felt giddy and almost sick with excitement. It was his afternoon for clearing up the school-room, however, so he had to tie the five-pence up in a corner of the grey rag he called his pocket-handkerchief, and stuff it very low down in his pocket, and take the broom and go to work. Mrs. Rodman bade him good-by kindly, and went away; and so, after a while, all the children did, and he was left alone.

The school-room was generally lamentably dirty on Friday afternoon, and poor Jerry was nearly stifled with the clouds of dust that rose from the application of his broom. He was in a great hurry to be off to the village for his roundhearts (which is not to be wondered at, considering he had not had a mouthful of food that day), but he had a general idea of his duty in regard to anything he had been entrusted with, and he knew the school-house had been left in his charge; so he worked away patiently at it, swept it as well as he could, and put the benches back in their places, then dusted it rather clumsily, but very faithfully; and at the end of his performances put away broom and duster, took his tattered cap from its peg, shut down the windows, and shut and locked the door. He ran around to Aunt Sally's,

where the key was kept, deposited it, and then made a "straight wake" for the village.

"Cross lots," of course, his route lay; the first lot was a ploughed one, and terribly stumbling work his poor weak knees made of it; but then the roundhearts ahead kept his courage up till he had crossed it. A tangled hedge of cat-brier and alder-bushes separated him from the next field, and he stooped down on his hands and knees to try to find a place to crawl through, when the sound of voices on the opposite side of the hedge made him stop a moment and listen, and then, as the meaning of the talking reached him, start up in anger and alarm.

The first voice he heard was *Moll's*, in a miserable, tortured, uncomfortable whine, as if some one were holding her very hard.

The second voice was Ap's, and he was saying low: "The shingle's too long by a couple of inches; it'll keep her too far out of the water. By George, I bet she'll drift a mile before she sinks."

"Don't lash her down too tight," Bill Watson whispered; "she can't kick if you do, and it's half the fun to see her kick and make the shingle go up and down."

"Give me some more cord," Ap said. "I'm sort of 'fraid of this, it's so thin. Double the next; there—that's better. Jingo! how strong she is! 'Pon my word it's all I can do to hold her."

"How are you going to get her down to the shore without the folks in the village seeing us?" asked Dick Slossom.

"Go along through the swamp till we come to Walton's hill, then cut across the road and along through the edge of the

church-yard till we come to the creek, and so on down to the beach. Nobody'll see, if we hurry."

As quickly as all this got through poor Jerry's bewildered head, he started up and bolted head foremost through the briars, appearing most unexpectedly to the astonished youths on the other side, and making them, for one instant, suspend their brutal business.

"What are you about? I say, put Moll down; put her down right off!" he gasped as soon as he could get his breath. There was something in his determined, resolute manner that for a moment influenced the boys; no one spoke, and they looked at him, till Ap, with a coarse laugh, helped them back to their accustomed insolence and ease. Indeed there was something half-ludicrous in the figure of the

lean, tattered urchin, as he stood facing the group of stout lads a head taller than he, and a good many times as strong. But Jerry never had a thought of fear; he would have fought them all in a minute; the sight of poor Moll lying there bound to the shingle, lashing her tail about with such certain significance of pain, and looking up at him with such a troubled look, made him fierce; he would kill them if they didn't let her go; he would; he didn't care——

“Oh ho! I'd like to see you touch her!” cried Ap. “I'd like to know how you're going to make us let her go!”

“Like as not he's going to thrash us all round,” laughed Bill.

“Don't hit me hard,” cried Dick, a big lazy negro about thirteen years old. “I'm so little you oughtn't to hurt me.”

"I don't care whether you're little or big," stammered Jerry, his fierce indignation almost choking him. "I don't care anything about you; but you've got to let her go; you shall—you shall——"

"How're you going to make us, that's all?" said Ap, doggedly, stooping down to go on with his cruel work.

"I'll show you how!" cried Jerry, doubling up his fist and dashing at him; but the other boys caught at him, and held him by the arms.

"Behave yourself, you little fool!"—and Dick shook him by the shoulders with considerable vehemence. "Keep quiet, or I'll give it to you."

"Let go my arm! you great big coward; let go! I say," and Jerry twisted his head round quickly, and snapped at his oppressor's hand with his teeth. Dick uttered a

yell of pain, and relaxed his grasp, giving him with the other hand a heavy blow on the ear.

"Try that again, and I'll show you!" he muttered, rubbing his hand and turning away.

"I'll show *you*, if you don't let Moll go," cried Jerry, beside himself with passion.

"Keep off! keep off! you rascal!" howled Ap, as Jerry's clumsy boot struck him a heavy kick,—and by a desperate exertion of strength the enraged boy freed himself from Bill's grasp, and sprang upon the kneeling Ap, and possessed himself of the tortured cat, and started madly across the field, before any one of the trio knew what he was about. Of course, his escape was hopeless. As soon as he started to run, his miserable weak limbs began to fail him, and in a moment the boys surrounded him.

Whether Bill Watson was more temperate because he had had no bite or kick, or whether he was by nature more humane, or, possibly, more avaricious, it is unimportant to decide. At any rate, he held back the violently-minded Ap, as he was plunging after Jerry, and, laying the other hand on that poor victim's shoulder, said, conciliatingly—

“Hold on, boys! Just stop a minute! What's the use o' all this muss? If Jerry's so mighty fond o' Moll, he can have her, as long as he's a mind to pay us for givin' of her up. He's got a five-cent piece. That's as much as 'll make up for the loss of the fun; ain't it, boys?”

A change was apparent in the faces of the boys. Well, yes; they guessed it would do. They guessed they'd give her up to Jerry for that. He might hand over

the fivepence. "No, that I won't," he cried indignantly. "You great big bullies, you shan't get my money that way."

And he struggled fiercely to get off. But there was no use, the poor lad soon saw. Either his precious little half-dime must be surrendered, or poor Moll must be given up to torture and death. "I can't—no, I can't," he thought miserably; "the roundhearts and all—and I'm so hungry. Oh, the stingy fellows! They *shan't* have it!" And he again wrestled desperately to release himself and his suffering favorite. But all to no purpose; one or the other they would have. And at last the thought of poor drowning Moll, and the sight of her present pitiful distress, overcame the pain of losing his treasure; and with a choking feeling in his throat, and a shaking uncertainty in his hands, he took the rag out of

his pocket and undid the corner of it, while Ap and Bill, whispering together, cut the string that bound Moll to the board, and took her up; and when Jerry, with an unsteady lip, and eyes that looked very anxiously another way, put the coin into Dick's hand, Bill threw down Moll upon the ground, and clapping his hands together, shouted, "Scat, scat."

Moll darted under the hedge, and disappeared. Bill gave Ap a wink, and Ap disappeared too. But this Jerry did not notice. His heart was too heavy to notice anything, now the effort was made, and all his great pleasure given up. He wasn't sorry he'd done it. He knew it was right, but it was dreadfully hard. He was too sick and miserable to cry, so he turned his back upon the village for which he had started in such good hopes a quarter of an

hour before, and dragged slowly and wearily back to the Hollow, while Dick and Bill strolled across to the road; and he saw them, as he reached home, sauntering on towards the village.

Jerry went up the overgrown path that led from the road to the house, and tried the door, but it was locked. Chary was gone away, then, and Jerry gave a sort of patient groan as he sat down on the stone before the door. He had begun to hope there might be some crusts in the house, and was making up his mind to be contented with them instead of the round-hearts; but here was an end of that now. To be sure, if he tried, there were several ways of getting into the old house. The window of the garret was open; and if he chose to carry the old step-ladder that was lying by the wood-pile round to it, he might

easily climb up and get into the attic. But the prospect of success in his search was too faint, or the idea of tugging the ladder around the house was too much for his strength; for he sat still on the door-step, with his chin on his hands, too weak and spiritless to move. By and by, however, Uncle Jake, a stalwart negro who lived a few doors off, shouted out to him from the potato-patch where he was hoeing, "I say, Jerry, what you about? Aunt Chary is gone to Sampson's, and won't be back till bout dark, and she wants you to go down to the shore and dig some clams for supper. The hoe and basket's round by the back door."

"Did she say I must go?" Jerry said, with a miserable conviction that this message indicated that there was nothing else for supper.

“Wall, ef she hadn’t, do you think I’d have told you so?”

And Uncle Jake resumed his work, and took no further notice of little Jerry.

CHAPTER III.

ASLEEP ON THE BEACH.



ORTUNATELY for Jerry, at the moment that he reached the gate, carrying the rake and basket, never so heavy before, a stripped wagon came along on its way to the saw-mill. He asked the man if he might ride; and the man nodded yes, and slacked up a little, and then stopped quite, when he saw the difficulty that the child had in climbing on. Jerry got his seat at last, however, and the horses started off very briskly. The ride rested

him a good deal, and the fresh wind in his face made him feel quite alive again; and by the time the man drew up at the saw-mill, he was strong enough to get down without stumbling, and to pick up his hoe and basket and walk off like a man, feeling them not half so heavy as they were before.

As he looked down towards the beach, he saw that the tide was still too high for clamming; so, knowing the best place was about half-way between the creek and the steamboat landing, he got over the fence and plodded across the swamp and Mr. Walton's cornfield, and at last came out upon the beach, just at the right of two large bathing-houses that stood alone below the fence. The tide had gone down very slowly; it was still too high, so he must wait awhile. He threw himself

down on the soft sand, in the shade of a clump of cedar-trees, and almost out of sight of anything at the right of him, by reason of the bathing-houses. The sand was very soft and dry, and the breeze blowing across the bay was cool and fresh; and by and by, lulled by the low sound of the water dashing up on the beach at his feet, and the stillness of everything else around him, the fagged child laid his head on his arm and fell fast asleep.

The next thing he was conscious of was the shutting and locking of the bathing-house door, which made him awake with a start. Sitting up and rubbing his eyes, he saw that the tide was more than half down, and he started to his feet in some alarm, nearly running against a young lad who had just come out of the bathing-house, and whom in his hurry and bewilderment,

he had not seen before. He was a manly-looking boy of about eleven years, very fresh and rosy from his bath, and followed close by the little Larry whom Jerry had that afternoon seen with his mother at the school.

"Hollo!" cried the older boy, "don't run over us, I say? Did you come with those boys? What are they about?"

"What boys?" stammered Jerry, confusedly, looking bewildered around him.

Aye, what boys indeed; and what were they about! Jerry looked down below, on the beach left bare by the retreating tide, and at the group pushing off the little boat that had been left high up by it; and dull and weary as his eyes were, they could not fail to see what it all meant. He put his hand for a moment to his head, as if it were confused and aching, then

sprang down towards them as if wild. The boat was off, Ap standing in the stern, and holding in his hand the shingle with poor Moll lashed on it, waiting for the word from his companions to throw her off into the deep water. There were no oars to the boat; so the two on the shore had given it a hard push, holding the anchor fast meantime, and had sent it quite far out; far enough for their purpose, in fact, which was only to get their wretched victim quite clear of the shore, and that was not a difficult thing, for the tide was falling, and would naturally carry her out into the bay, whether they started her that way or not, and she was perfectly helpless, and at the mercy of the current.

They started guiltily, when Jerry rushed down the beach; but Bill, recovering himself, called out to Ap to give

her a good swing quick, and they'd pull him in.

"Swing her if you dare," cried Jerry, seizing the rope and trying to pull the boat in. "I'll kill you if you throw her in the water ; I'll kill you——"

"Swing her off—quick, quick," shouted Dick to Ap.

But Jerry, like a little savage as he was, rushed into the water up to his waist and clutched at the boat. It was just beyond his reach, but another plunge brought him to it ; and grasping the side with one hand, with the other he dealt a vehement blow on Ap's naked legs, and was rewarded by a hard kick in return.

"Stamp on his hands ; kick him ; kick him off," cried Bill.

"Swing the cat ; swing her quick !" shouted Dick.

But Ap could not swing Moll; he had his hands full, parrying Jerry's frantic blows, and it was not till he had beaten the boy off from the boat that he was able to lift the shingle up and give it the desired hurl out beyond his reach. But whether from hurry, or from excitement, or the dread of having those savage fists about his legs again if he didn't get to shore, Ap did not give the cat the toss he had intended; she struck the water not ten feet from where they were, struck head foremost, went partly under, but came all out again in an instant, dripping and horrible to look at, with her distended eyes and gasping mouth.

Before Ap knew it or could resist, Jerry was in the boat beside him, and hand to hand they renewed the fight; Jerry struggling to get to the stern of the boat, where

he hoped to reach the shingle, Ap holding him back and returning blow for blow. At this moment the boys on the shore began to pull in the boat, for they began to fear for the result of the encounter; and the white boys by the bathing-house had come down and demanded what it meant, as if, should they find it wrong, they would surely do their best to right it. But the sudden motion of the boat threw them both down. Ap made a violent effort to push Jerry overboard, but, as is not unfrequently the case, his evil design came back upon himself; his efforts made the boat tip just an inch too far, and into the water they both rolled, Jerry uppermost, only relaxing his hold on his antagonist as they went under. They rose in an instant; Jerry touched bottom where he stood, and making a violent plunge in the

direction of the half-drowned cat, struck vigorously out and swam towards her. The tide, however, had drifted her into pretty deep water by this time, and little Jerry's arms were very weak, and he was but an indifferent swimmer; it was no wonder he did not make much headway, loaded down with his clumsy clothes and heavy boots, and growing fainter every minute.

How had he struggled! What brave strokes he tried to make with his limbs, out of which the strength seemed going—going so fast! How anxiously he kept his eyes on the object ahead of him, which did not seem to grow a bit nearer, work as hard as he might! How cold and wide the bay looked with his eyes on a level with it; and the waves came into his mouth at every stroke, and his head seemed to be

growing lower and lower down, and the rush of the water in his ears almost deafened him.

Poor Moll ! Oh; if he could only get to her, they would both go down together ; they would get rid of the cruel, ugly, wicked people ; they wouldn't be unhappy any more ; he didn't care what happened to 'em, he didn't care what God did to 'em—God was good.

His head was getting lower and lower ; the rushing, deafening waves were rolling in his ears and blinding his eyes ; a faint, limp feeling was creeping over all his limbs. There was no use, he couldn't get her ; he was sinking ; he stretched his hand out once, but it was far too short to reach the shingle, now not three feet off ; he had tried his best ; he had to give

up. He tried to say, or perhaps he only thought,

“Deliver us from evil,”

and the struggle was over; the waves choked the prayer as they rolled over him. .
Poor Jerry had sunk. Moll on her board rode the waters alone.

CHAPTER IV.

THE LITTLE HERO.



ALF an hour later that afternoon, there was an unusual stir on the steps of Mrs. Danforth's house; the doctor's gig stood before the door; and that gentleman, just going, was giving his departing instructions to the nurse, who, with an armful of flannel wrappers, stood on the piazza, beside him, while little Larry, with very large and excited eyes, holding fast his mother's dress, watched them from the doorway.

"Keep Master Roland in bed till I see

him to-morrow morning," the doctor was saying. "I don't apprehend any ill effects from his adventure to-day, but it is best to be on the safe side. He is only a little restless from his excitement and exertions, I fancy, and will be quite fresh after a good night's sleep. Such a brave boy ought not to be neglected, at any rate. I am sure you have reason to be proud of him, Mrs. Danforth."

"I think I am—a little, perhaps," she answered, with a smile. "But it is no more than we ought to have expected of Roland; you know that he has always been told his duty, whereas poor little Jerry, untaught and neglected, has turned out such a hero, that I feel I can never admire him enough."

"Poor little fellow!" said the doctor, thoughtfully. "He is such a dull-looking

child, I never imagined he was capable of so much courage. How did you hear the whole story of the sixpence and the roundhearts ? ”

“ Why, Ap, the ringleader of the plot, was very much subdued and terrified at his own fall into the water ; and when he reached the shore and witnessèd, with the others, Jerry’s attempts to reach the cat, and his subsequent failure of strength, he was very much overcome and horrified ; and after Roland brought to shore what he thought was poor Jerry’s dead body, he began to cry and say, ‘ They had done it ; it was all their fault.’ I started for the beach just then and met him coming up the lane, crying bitterly ; and he told me all the story, with a little coaxing and threatening, before I knew exactly who was hurt or what had happened.”

“Well, well,” said the doctor, “I hope poor little Jerry will live through his trial, and get well; and there’s one thing certain, we won’t let him starve if he does. He shall have as many roundhearts as he can cram for the balance of his days. I will come early to-morrow, ma’am, and hope to hear good news of both my patients, indeed, of all three, I may say; for Moll, down by the kitchen fire, she counts one, doesn’t she? Larry, my boy! I leave her in your charge. Give her another Dover’s powder if she’s restless in the night, and don’t forget the warm applications; they’re of great importance. Good-by, madam.”

Larry grew very red and hot, and looked up awkwardly in his mother’s face to see whether the doctor was joking or serious, as he drove off. His mother laughed and

said, "She didn't think Moll would need the powder, but he might go down and see whether she was doing well, and then come up and sit by Roland if he liked." He did like, and went down to the kitchen and walked softly over to the fireplace, where, in a warm corner on the hearth, stood a basket, in which, on a soft, thick old shawl, lay Moll, an unfinished bowl of bread and milk standing on the hearth beside her basket, being probably the first unfinished nourishment that had ever before been allowed to stand within her reach since she had begun to provide for herself.

Larry's hospitable attentions knew no bounds; he overwhelmed her with bread and milk, chicken soup, and panada, the last two preparations being intended for the young invalids up-stairs, and gave her no peace till she had completely gorged

herself and nearly brought on a fit. She rather resisted being put in the basket, and got out several times; but at last, a little overcome by the heat and her unusual state of satiety, she gave in, and lay down rather uncomfortably and looked about her. But it became evident even to Larry that

“The burden of an honor whereunto she was not born,”

was having a very depressing effect upon her. She tried to be contented, but she was visibly in a much disturbed state of mind. Her submission rather touched Larry, and, after consulting with Rosamond, the cook, he concluded that it wouldn't hurt her to take a little gentle exercise, if she confined herself to the kitchen; so he lifted her out of the basket, and then ran and shut all the doors and

windows, and got up on the table and watched her. She walked about much as cats usually walk, and at length sat herself down near the door, and mewed a little uneasily. It was possible that the increasing heat had something to do with her discomfort, for by that time the thermometer would have stood at 96° in the coldest corner of the kitchen; and the cook, at last aroused to the state of the temperature, made a great outcry, and rushed about bursting open doors and windows, and ejaculating that they'd all have been smothered in three minutes more of such heat. Larry jumped down from his table and ran after her, imploring her to stop, that Moll would get away; but the business was done, and before he could reach the cat she had slipped out of the door and was lost to sight among the lilac-

bushes. In great consternation the little boy followed and called her, but the only glimpse he caught of her after that, was as she darted from the lilac-bushes to the shelter of the piazza. Her practised eye had discovered a loose stone that no doubt had admitted many cats before her time to the lofty, dark, cobwebbed hall under the long piazza, where they were safe from all pursuit, and where, also, the pleasures of the chase were to be enjoyed to some extent. It had long been the favorite rendezvous of the mice from the cellar and the mice from the house, and the danger of the meeting-ground only seemed to heighten its attractions for them. Moll sniffed about with interest, and felt very complacent as she sat herself down a few feet from the entrance, quite out of reach of the pole with which Larry was poking

about for her, and quite out of reach of the anxious pair of eyes he applied to the hole which admitted the only daylight that illumined the place.

Larry did not give up till the tea-bell rang, and then he went in and whispered low to his mother the misfortune that had befallen him in his capacity of nurse, and the great fears he entertained for Moll's safety. His mother comforted him very much by saying she did not think there was any danger of Moll's taking cold, and that it was probable she enjoyed herself much better under the piazza than by the kitchen fire. She would no doubt come out when she was hungry; and if he fed her well she would soon be quite over all the bad effects of her bath.

There was very little else talked about at the tea-table besides Jerry's trying to

save Moll, and Roland's saving Jerry. The patient papa had heard the whole story from each one of the children separately, and then submitted to hear it in chorus again at the table, for they all talked at once, and all so eagerly that the words and the sense were not much clearer to the listener than the chorus of a new opera is to one who hears it for the first time.

But in such a case as this, ordinary rules must give way; and the children went to bed twenty minutes later than usual that night, quite worn out with their unaccustomed excitement and the unaccustomed liberty it had obtained for them. Roland, indeed, could hardly get asleep at all, and muttered wildly even when he slept all night long. Poor little Jerry's night was even worse than the nurse had feared.

She watched beside him till almost day-break, hoping the fever would abate, and that he would get some rest. He was quite delirious and wide awake, though, until dawn, when the medicines he had taken began to affect him, and he fell into an uneasy doze.

It was towards evening of that day, when, coming suddenly back into the room which she had left about ten minutes before, the nurse found Jerry sitting up in bed, his eyes wide open, staring about him. He had lain all day in a sort of stupor, and this was his first view of the strange place to which his adventure had led him. It was such a very different room from any he had ever waked up in before, and such a very different bed from any he had ever slept on before! It was a little room, and an attic room too; but very clean and

comfortable, and pleasant-looking; and the sheets were so white, Jerry felt that he looked like a cockroach or a beetle lying in them. Where was he; what did it all mean; who was this coming in to take care of him? And the thinking made his head swim so that he had to lay it down on the pillow again.

"Well, my little man," said the nurse, coming up to the bed, "and how do you feel by this time?"

"What time?" returned Jerry, troubled and unsettled in all his ideas of date and place, and looking anxiously up at her.

"Why, this time," she said, laughing; "just now. Does your head ache?"

"I believe it does," he answered slowly, putting his hand up to his forehead and half-turning over in bed. "Where—where am I; do you know?"

"Well, yes, I know; and I'll tell you. You know who Mrs. Danforth is, don't you?"

"Her as comes up to the school? *Oh*, yes."

"Well, you know she's a very kind lady, and when you were pitched out of the boat the other night, you were brought up to her house; and here you are now, and here I am, a taking care of you. That's all, ain't it?"

"Out of the boat!" and Jerry looked very much bewildered. "What boat?"

"Oh, no matter, child, if you don't remember. You fell out of a boat, that's all, and got sick after it. Now lie still like a good boy till I get something for you to eat."

It all seemed, however, to come back to his recollection like a flash; for raising

himself up on his elbow and looking wildly in her face, he stammered out :

“ Where—where’s Moll ? ”

“ Oh, she’s all right ; there, lie down a minute and you shall see her for yourself.”

She went out of the room, and in a few minutes returned, followed by Larry, holding Moll in his arms, and looking excited and delighted. Moll, however, struggled herself out of his arms as soon as they entered the room, and with an eager mew, darted across the floor and sprang up on the bed. Jerry’s bewildered eyes softened and cleared as they fell on her ; and putting his arms around her, his face grew natural and childish-looking as he listened to her affectionate purr. She settled herself comfortably down on his arm, and he turned his face towards her on the pillow, and seemed quite content to lie still so, and

not ask any more questions, or bother his brain about how they both got there, so comfortable and safe, after their frightful parting out on the bay, at some unknown period of time past.

CHAPTER V.

DELIVERED FROM EVIL.



THE evening on which Jerry, dressed in his new suit of clothes, first came in to prayers with the rest of the servants, was an exciting one to the Danforth children. Indeed the younger ones looked at him with much more interest than was consistent with the attention their father expected them to pay to the chapter he read them from the Bible; and when Moll, pushing open the door which had been left ajar, introduced her glossy, improved person into the room, there was a general

stir and tittering among them. Jerry, looking infinitely distressed, took her up and put her out; and the children, from his serious face, caught an apprehension that there wasn't anything funny in it after all, perhaps, and quieted gradually down. Indeed, poor Jerry, though he felt a little queer and awkward in his new clothes, never seemed to lose sight, for a minute, of the new and strange duty that had brought him there, and the soberness and attention required of people saying their prayers to God.

Perhaps, little as he suspected it, Jerry's example in this, did the children good, and reminded them of that which, by constant familiarity with the duty, they had begun somewhat to neglect; and his steady, slow, earnest way of going through his daily work, and his constant good temper and

willingness to serve them, made him as great a favorite with them as with their elders. Roland taught him reading and writing in the evenings, and helped him learn his Catechism for Sundays; and felt, in a manner, that he was personally responsible for his improvement and good behavior. And Jerry responded in gratitude and affection to the interest and patience of his young preserver.

A happy, safe, Christian home, indeed, poor Jerry had been rewarded with after all his sufferings and temptations. The recollection of those first years of his miserable childhood only stayed by him to make him see more clearly the mercy that had brought him safely out of danger, and the answer that even such imperfect childish prayers as his had obtained.

Jerry's intellect, to be sure, was none of

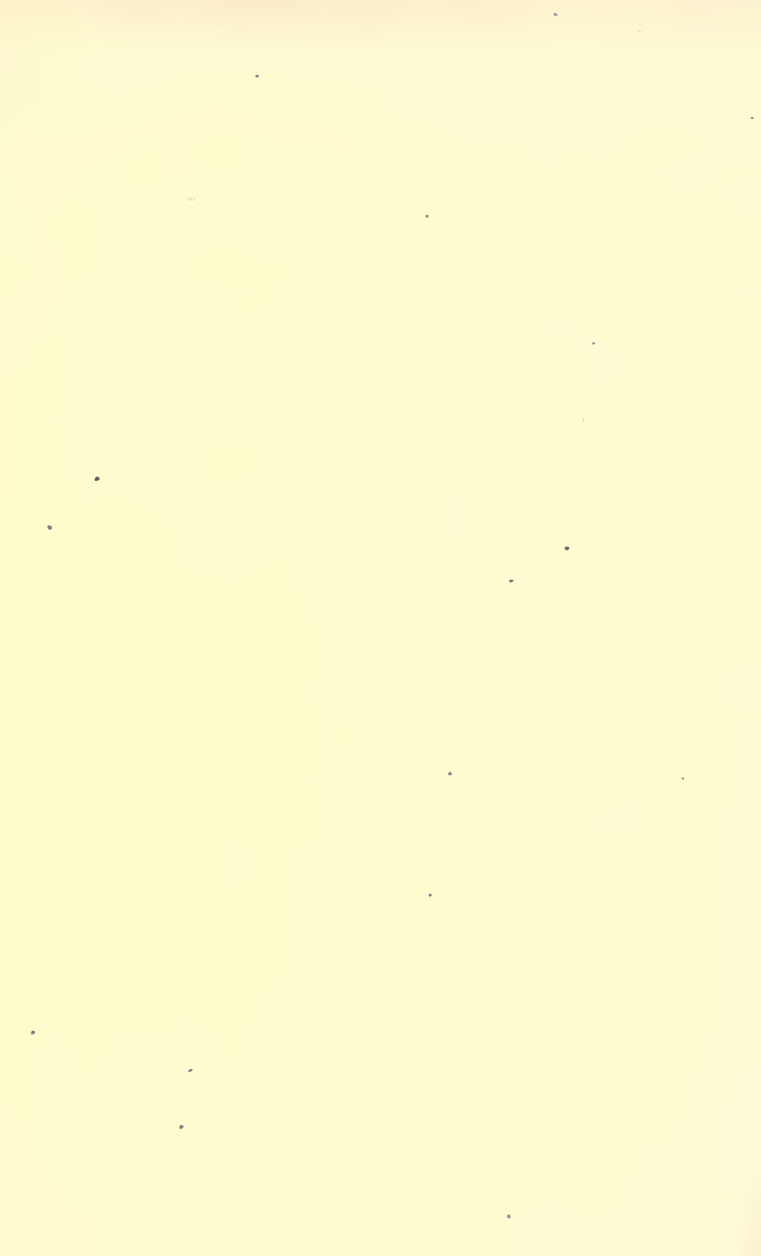
the brightest, and the learning he acquired, with all his patience, never amounted to the requirements even of a decent education; but "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and a good understanding have all they that do thereafter." And remembering that, no one can wonder that Jerry lived to be a respectable, hard-working, prosperous man, long after he had seen his old companions and persecutors fallen into evil ways, and seen them reach the inevitable end of evil ways.

Doing his duty simply and sincerely, not looking above his station, but being as faithful as he knew how to be in it; the God whom he served took kind care of him, and ordered for his good all the events of his honest, honorable life.





THE CHRISTMAS SISTER.



THE CHRISTMAS SISTER.



HERE was a loud ringing at the door.

"Some of our presents, I'll bet a cookie," cried Paul, and then stoppèd short, for he had been told a great many times not to say "I'll bet."

"Just supposing it should be," murmured little Anita, holding her breath as she listened.

The two children were alone in the parlor, and it was Christmas Eve. Do little children ever think of anything but presents on Christmas Eve, I wonder? Anita, and Paul her older brother, were pretty good children, and very apt to be pleased with whatever came to them. They were never disappointed in their stockings, though they imagined so many things beforehand, that it would have taken a much larger house than the one they lived in, to have held them all, if they had come.

The ring proved to be only a man with brooms for sale, and the servant slammed the door after him, as if she thought nobody had any business to bring her up-stairs on such an errand; and the children fell back to their places by the window, as if they thought nobody had any business to be selling brooms on Christmas Eve.

"Who does he suppose wants his old brooms!" said Paul, sulkily.

"Oh, well, never mind! There's plenty of time for the presents to come yet. Look, it's only seven o'clock."

"I wish it were nine, and I were fast asleep," said Paul. "I wish it weren't so dreadful long till morning!"

"Oh, no," said Anita; "it's a pity to wish it all over. Make believe we weren't in any hurry."

So the wise little woman cuddled herself up in the arm-chair by the fire, and patted her doll's hard head, and whispered to her that to-morrow was Christmas-Day.

"Oh, dolly!" she whispered with a sigh, "if you only understood what I said to you, and if your head was not so very hard!"

Poor little Anita! She longed so to have a doll with warm little hands and soft hair

that curled, and was not put on with glue. She always felt like covering her dolls' eyes up, when they stared directly at her without any sense in them, and she thought they looked worse still, when she pulled the wire and shut them up. She loved her doll, but she was not satisfied with her; and it was not safe to tell Paul how she felt, for Paul always laughed at "Rosalind," and would do so a great deal more, if she told him her own little discontents about her.

The only person she dared to talk to was dear mamma, who seemed to understand better than anybody. Mamma was sick now, too sick to be talked to very much; but Anita, as she sat nursing her stiff pet before the fire, felt such a desire to have a little comfort about it, that she made up her mind to go and try if she could get in at her mother's door. So slipping down

off her chair, she tucked "Rosalind" under her arm, and said to Paul:

"I'm going to mamma's room for awhile. You call me if any presents come."

"No," said Paul; "I shall go too. It's so tiresome waiting here alone."

Anita gave a little sigh. She did not want Paul to come. She liked her talks with her mother best alone, but she was too good a little girl to be cross and say he shouldn't. She knew he had a right to come if he pleased, and she only said:

"Well, we must be very quiet."

Their mother's door was ajar, and Anita pushed it a little further open, and said, "Can we come in?" in such a dear little gentle voice, that she could not have said "no," even if she had not wanted them. They went in, while their father shook his head and said he feared they would disturb

her. She was sitting up in a large chair by the fire, which was blazing very brightly, and which made her look better than she looked by daylight. Their father was sitting by her holding one of her hands, but he made a place for Paul on his knee, while Anita nestled herself down on the footstool at her mother's feet.

"How's Rosalind?" said mamma, in her low, tired voice.

"Oh, much as usual," answered Anita with a sigh, laying her down on the floor beside her.

Mamma smiled. She knew all about her little girl's thoughts just from that.

"It would be nice if her hair grew out of her head, wouldn't it?" she whispered, too low for Paul to hear.

"Oh, mamma!" exclaimed Anita, with another sigh.

"And if her nose weren't so hard and pointed when you struck against it?"

"Ah!"

"And if her little feet were pink and soft, and if she kicked them up in your face and laughed when you laid her on your lap and put her night-clothes on!"

"And if her arms moved without a creak, mamma!"

"And if you could put her in the bath-tub and sponge all around her little neck and cheeks, without having any of the paint come off!"

"And if, oh mamma, if she could shut her eyes, without making herself look so very nasty!"

"And if she could put her arms around your neck, Anita, and cuddle up close, close to you, dear!"

"Oh don't, mamma; please don't," cried

Anita, sinking back. "There's no use talking anything about it. I've thought so much about it, I'm tired of thinking and wishing any more! I don't care a bit about my presents to-morrow. I'd rather have a doll like that, than all the toy-shops in the town."

"Oh no, Anita," said mamma. "Think of the nice games and books that may be coming. And who knows but there may be a globe of gold-fish, and a toy village, and possibly a set of china, blue and gold, and all complete!"

But Anita shook her head again.

"I don't care sixpence for them all, if I could only have a live baby to take care of and to love."

"But, Anita! you don't know how much trouble it would be, and how it would cry and worry, and have to be patted and trotted, and put to sleep."

"Just what I want to do for it, mamma," cried Nita, putting her hands together eagerly. "Then I should feel as if I were being useful, and as if it couldn't get on without me, and as if it were my very own, and it would be fun to get tired that way. Oh dear!"

"It wouldn't lie still like Rosalind for hours, while you went off to play with Paul, you know."

"I shouldn't want to play with Paul, mamma. That is only because Rosalind is tiresome and doesn't take any interest in what I do for her."

Mamma smiled again, and passed her hand gently over her little girl's hair, and then leaned back in her chair, seeming too tired to talk any more. Papa noticed that very quickly, for he was always watching her, and drew Anita away from her, and

took her on his other knee and began to tell a story, so that they should not talk. The story was an interesting one, but it did not put out of Anita's head the things she had been whispering about with mamma. So that when papa at length put them down and told them to give their good-night kiss and run away, she put her lips up to her mother's ear and said softly:

"Do you think, mamma, there is *any* chance of my ever having a better baby than Rosalind to play with?"

"Why, yes—perhaps some time you may, my child," her mother answered, hesitatingly. "Yes, perhaps, if you are very good."

"Mamma," and her voice sunk, "do you think I might possibly—possibly have it for to-morrow, if I gave up all the other things?"

"Oh, as to that, dear, don't think anything about it. Enjoy whatever comes."

"I wonder—that is—mamma, just tell me—Does God have anything to do with such things? Does He know what we want for Christmas, and all that?"

"Yes, darling, He knows all we want, and all that will be good for us."

"And there is no harm in asking Him for things?"

"None, Anita."

"Then, mamma, I'll tell you what I mean to do to-night when I say my prayers. I mean to ask Him to send all my toys to the poor children in the lane, and to send a live baby to this house—a live, good, darling baby! Oh, mamma, wouldn't that be a Christmas! Oh, mamma! how I shall pray for it! Good-night, dear, sweet mamma!"

Anita thought that there were tears on her mother's cheeks as she kissed her, and stroked her hair, and held her close to her before she let her go. But lately there had been tears so often in her mother's eyes, that she did not wonder very much about it; only felt a little solemn as she went away.

When Anita said her prayers, she did not forget to ask for a live Christmas baby; indeed she stayed so long on her knees, that Paul, from his little room, began to whistle and hum and thump on the head of the bed, by way of hurrying her up and getting somebody to talk to.

"I should think you would be frozen, saying such long prayers," he said, when he saw her cross the room to put out the light.

"Well, I am not," she answered, as she went back to bed. "And I should like to be let alone sometimes."

"Oh, you would, would you?" remarked Paul. "Well, that's natural. I do myself, generally. But you see it's plaguy lone-some lying here in the dark, and I want somebody to talk to."

"If mamma had asked *me* not to say plaguy, I don't think I should have done it—Christmas Eve, at all events."

"Why not Christmas Eve, more'n any other time, I'd like to know?" asked Paul, in rather a gruff way.

Anita could not tell exactly, so she did not say anything. She had a sort of feeling that on Christmas Eve people ought to be better and more careful to do right than on ordinary days. She felt as if the Great Birthday was a time when it seemed very wicked not to be quieter and more thoughtful than usual, but she did not feel sure that she could make Paul understand her. So

she let him talk on about his presents and his plans for play till he made her feel very sleepy and stupid, and till he dropped asleep himself. Soon the starlight, faint and soft, shone into the two silent rooms where the two children were lying, hands tucked under cheeks, fast and happily asleep.

Visions of sugar-plums! Oh, more than that went dancing through their heads. Through Paul's there passed, harnessed and equipped, unnumbered pairs of hobby-horses, troops of grocery carts and milkmen's wagons, and trains upon trains of railroad cars and engines. Tops, kites, balls, paint-boxes, and picture-books; while through simple Anita's there was the one only thought of the little prayed-for baby that she had talked about with her mother before she came to bed.

The night was not very far gone, "mid-

night scarcely passed and over," when Anita awoke with a little start, and sitting up in bed, rubbed her eyes and listened. Oh, perhaps it was a dream! but what made her wake up? A little faint baby-cry, and then a silence. Anita's heart beat quick, and she strained her ears to listen. Could it be possible she had her wish so soon! She had expected to have it, to be sure, and had felt certain God would hear her; but she felt a great wonder that it was so soon. The cry did not come again, though she listened long and could not lie down and forget it. She began to feel as if she should cry, herself, from disappointment; the room was so still, and the idea that it was all a dream was so very much more sensible than any other idea. She felt very chilly, too, and her shoulders ached with being uncovered; but she would not

lie down and cover them under the bed-clothes. That was too much like giving up.

After awhile, a long while it seemed to her, there was a little stir down-stairs, and steps in the hall, and then the hall-door opened and shut, and presently a carriage drove away from the gate, and all was silent again. Anita hardly breathed. Oh, if some one would only come up-stairs and tell her what it was all about.

Ten minutes after, some one did come up-stairs very quietly, as if not meaning to waken her and Paul. Her father came into the room and passed quietly on through it, to a large closet that opened out of it, where linen and medicines were put away. He held a candle which he shaded with his hand, and Anita saw his face was rather pale. She did not dare to

speaking to him, and he did not glance at the bed as he passed through the room and stood within the closet door, very intent upon what he had come to look for. When he had found it, and had silently closed the door, and had just reached the hall, Anita's courage came desperately back. She stretched out her arms and said :

“ Oh, dear papa ! listen a minute ! ”

Her father gave a start upon hearing her voice, and came back saying in surprise :

“ Why, Nita ! what are you doing awake at this time of night ? ”

She looked so white and odd, sitting up in bed in her white night-clothes, and her eyes were so large and eager, that her father felt sure she was ill, or had been frightened

“ What is it, my little girl ? ” he said

again, sitting down on the bed, and putting his arm around her.

"Tell me," she whispered, "has it come? I thought I heard it."

"Has what come?" he said, inquiringly.

"My baby, papa. Oh, I thought I heard it cry."

And the tears came into her eyes as she turned away her face.

The father gave a half-smile, and was silent a moment, and then whispered: "Come and see."

He lifted her in his arms, and wrapping she bare feet up in the folds of her night-gown, carried her through the dark and silent house. Anita felt as if her breath would never come again; she clung around her father's neck, and almost wished she had not waked up at all.

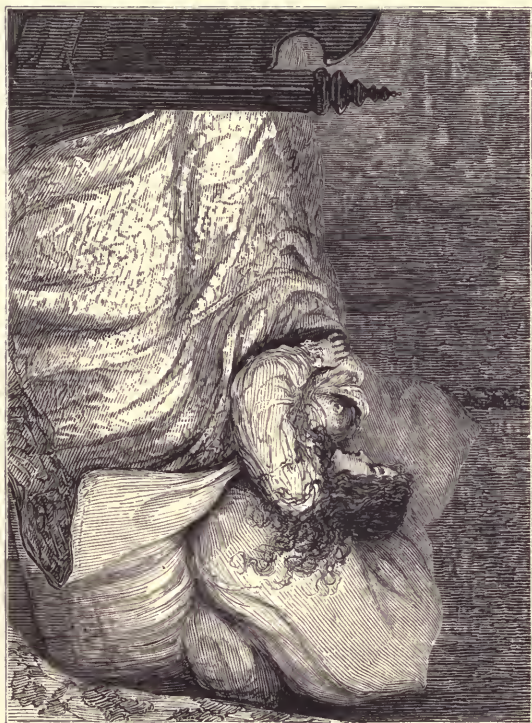
He pushed softly open the door of her mother's room. There was a very dim light in it, but she caught sight of her mother on the bed, lying very quiet, and some one else by the fire, she did not know who, or care. For while her father said hush, in a very low whisper, he carried her to a little crib—the crib that used to stand in the nursery, now all fresh with light, white drapery—and pulling the curtains softly back, he held her down to kiss a soft, pink, sleeping baby! Anita gave a gasp of amazement and delight, and clasped her hands together as she bent down and laid her cheek against its warm face. She could have screamed and laughed with delight, only she shook so, and felt more like hiding her face on the pillow and crying with happiness. Oh, how wonderful God was! Oh, what a Christmas!

Oh, what a good girl she was going to be! She would never say a cross word to any one after this! She would love everybody; she would be just like mamma, and mend Paul's mittens for him every day if he wore holes in them for ever.

She gave the baby another kiss as silent as the first, and then her father lifted her up and carried her back to her room in a sort of dream.

He laid her down on the bed, and gave her a good-night kiss, and smiled at her expression of perfect satisfaction. She did not want to be anything but awake after that; she lay still and happy till it was almost dawn, and then fell asleep with the soft, warm feel of the baby's cheek still on her lips, and the happiest love filling her innocent heart.

Dear little Anita! The Christmas bells



never wakened a better nor a happier child than she; and the little Christmas sister was a gift of which she never tired, a plaything and a pleasure that never wore out nor faded.

5*



THE BOY-REGIMENT.



THE BOY-REGIMENT.

CHAPTER I.

THE DRILL-ROOM.

"Where two or three are gathered together in My name,
there am I in the midst of them."



KING, noble and powerful,
and feared of all his enemies,
once sent a commission to
some of his officers to recruit,
for his service, a new regiment to be
added to the ranks of his great army.
Not a regiment of men, well-grown
and hardy, but a regiment of boys of all
ages and conditions. The officers very

likely wondered what the king wanted of children, encumbering the movements of the army, and in need of so much drilling; but they were too well-trained and faithful servants to express their wonder, or allow it to hinder their obedience. But when they heard this little army were to be the chosen attendants of the king, were to surround his person and stand continually in his presence, their amazement grew much greater, and they thought: "We must be careful indeed in the training of these boys, and must seek out from all quarters the strongest and best-grown lads that can be found."

But on reading the commission again, they discovered the choice did not lie with them. They must summon all—the children of high and low, rich and poor, the youngest and weakest as well as the best-grown and

strongest—and give them the clearest instructions they could, and the most faithful training, and the king himself would watch their progress, and select from all the host the ones who pleased him most.

Great interest all the parents felt in this announcement, and they very eagerly brought their children forward, and had their names enlisted among the candidates for the royal favor. "There, children," some of them said, "we have done our part; we have given you the chance. It will be your own fault if the king rejects you."

But the wiser parents knew their part was not done when they had enlisted their children under the king's banner; they knew they must assist and enforce the teaching of the officers, and daily keep alive the ambition they had kindled.

On a certain day in every week the

children were told they must assemble at a certain place and receive the instructions of their officers, and be drilled in all soldierly exercises, and be made ready for the Grand Review that at some unknown, though not distant day, the king would hold in person, when from their ranks he would select his favorites.

But strangest, most exciting of all, was the intelligence that, in the great drill-room where they were to meet, the king himself had promised to be present, observing and overlooking them, seeing all they did, and noting their obedience or disobedience to the officers placed over them, and judging by their every-day behavior whether they would in time be fit for his attendants. Though he was to see them, however, they were not to see him; hidden from their sight, he was to watch them silently, and

they never were to stand face to face before him till the day of the Grand Review.

And from cottage, hall, and hovel the children flocked, jostling each other in their eagerness, and pressing forward very manfully into the service.

At first; but it is very easy to be in earnest at first, every child and man and woman knows. It is quite another part of speech, being in earnest about a thing when the thing has got to be an old story, and has lost the spice of novelty. Persevering, going straight on, whether the duty has got to be tiresome or not, just because it is a duty—that is the test of real earnestness.

The drill-room was a great dark building, with an echoing stone floor and a vast carved roof, so far above their heads that it made the little children who came from low,

thatched cottages and dingy cabins dizzy to look up at it.

At one end of this building, in a space railed off from the rest, the officer or officers of the king stood, and read to the children the message of the king out of a great book that contained the record of what the noble army they were to join had already done, and what the king's will was, and what kind of service pleased him best.

On entering the building, the children were taught to make a deep reverence or salutation, just as if they really saw the king, who saw them, and to take their places among their comrades silently and in order, and to listen reverently and obediently to all their officers read to them out of the book of records, and to regard all they commanded them to do, just as if the king himself spoke; for the king had placed them

over the children, instead of training them himself; and any disobedience or disrespect to them, was disobedience and disrespect to him.

The place too, considering he was in it, though they did not see him, it became their duty to regard with reverence and to occupy with decorum and silence.

At first, this seemed easy and natural enough. The children held their breath with awe, and trod on tiptoe down the echoing pavement, and hardly moved a muscle from the time they came till they went away, when they first began their services. The idea that the great king of whom they had heard so much, was looking down upon them, and watching every glance and movement, made them fearful lest they should displease him with carelessness or haste; and their conduct was so

orderly, and their discipline so promising, the officers began to hope there would be very few rejected when the Day of Review should come.

But week after week passed, and the king did not summon them to the court to be reviewed; and week after week the drill was gone through, and the orders read, and the children disciplined.

And a great change since the first assembling seemed to have come over the little multitude. There was not much eagerness or enthusiasm now about being early on the ground; there were very lagging steps in going to the drill, and much loitering by the way; and when entering the building, some forgot their reverence altogether, and pushed on carelessly into their places, and some made it thoughtlessly and hastily, and jostled their companions,

and whispered when the reading was going on, and seemed to forget there was any presence more august than that of their officers among them, and anything more serious to be feared than their displeasure.

For, in truth, it is a difficult thing to believe in what we cannot see, and the king knew this beforehand; and knew the surest way of testing his little servants' faith and obedience, would be by obliging them to serve a king they could not see, and promising them a reward, of which his promise was the only security they had.

And after awhile some of them began to doubt in their hearts whether the king were there at all; and some of them, not seeing him, grew forgetful altogether that they had ever been told he would be there; and others, finding he did not punish them or take any notice of their negligences

began not to care whether he were there or not, and to think it made no difference whether he saw them or not, or whether they behaved well or ill.

While a few—alas! that it was but a few—kept their king's promise and presence always before their eyes, and never forgot what he had said, and what they would lose by their irreverence, and came as early and obeyed as faithfully, and felt as reverently the last day as the first; they had a good deal of ridicule to bear for this, and very little reward from their officers, but quiet approval and silent encouragement, for it was the king's command that in the drilling of the boys there should be no punishments inflicted, and no rewards held out. The honor of serving him, the fear of displeasing him, were to be their only stimulants and warnings.

The kind and faithful officers had a weary task ; the insubordination, the carelessness, the irreverence the boys displayed, made them tremble for the wrath they were bringing on their thoughtless heads. " Oh, that they were wise ; that they knew the things that would profit them," they thought despairingly, as they warned and exhorted and counselled them in vain. The headstrong little rebels, one encouraging the other, turned a deaf ear to all their warnings ; and fearing only, and caring only, for the things that are seen, forgot and scorned the things that are unseen, but are eternal. Why should they care any more for that building than for any other ? Why should they be more careful of their looks and gestures there, than when they were at home ? If the king saw them, his silence proved he did

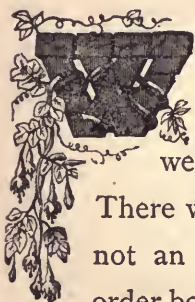
not care; and if he did not see them, they were foolish to be so much in awe. It would be time enough to grow more orderly and learn the discipline prescribed, when the Day of Review was near at hand.

So the souls of the foolish children grew hardened and more full of folly; and the souls of the faithful children grew gentler and more full of reverence; and the Great Day drew on, and dawned, when they looked least for it.

CHAPTER II.

THE GRAND REVIEW.

"Ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh."



WHEN the sudden summons to appear before the king came, it took all, officers as well as children, by surprise.

There was not a moment to prepare, not an instant to glance over the order-book and snatch another reading of the neglected regulations; no time to compose their fears or recall their instructions; but from the ill-spent hours in

the drill-room, they were to march to the court of the king, and appear, unprepared, before his august majesty.

With beating hearts and white faces and faltering steps they took up their march ; no loitering, no jostling, no trifling this time on their way to the king's presence. One would have thought they had never been in it before, they were so startled at the prospect of meeting him. It was difficult to realize, these were the same children who had come before him every week for such a long, long time. Their terror now showed they had not believed that they had indeed been in his presence in the drill-room.

But how the scales seemed turned ! The boys who had always been so fearful and so silent in the house of discipline, now seemed bright and full of hope. This

summons, indeed, was anything but dreadful to them. They had looked for it so long, and thought of it so often, it was not startling when it came. They were not sure, of course, they would be chosen; they were humble and full of wonder at the king's goodness in even letting them try; but their desire to see him, and to hear his gracious voice, overcame and subdued their doubts and fears, and with firm tread, and earnest, erect carriage, they followed their half-sad leaders to the royal presence.

Ah! when they entered that glorious court, it was only eyes that had no shame in them, that could bear the blaze of splendor that streamed upon them. Confused, blinded, terrified, the bewildered and undisciplined of the ranks faltered, held back, and fell into disorder, till, drawn on by mortal terror, they crept trembling into the pre-

sence they had so long scorned and slighted.

No fear that the reverences this time would not be deep enough; down to the very pavement of the glittering court the astounded children bent; the careless, wandering eyes that before had been so busy with all things that concerned them not, were fastened in awful penitence and unavailing anguish on the ground; there was no need to caution them, to warn them where they were.

They dared not look up and see the vast army, drawn up on each side of the Great White Throne before them—nor the white-robed throng who watched their slow advance; and the king whom they had not believed in, was a terror they could not face. Oh if they could fly, if they could hide themselves from the sight of all that

glory—the glory they might have won and would not, and that now was worse than the blackest darkness to them. What terror smote them when they called to mind the wasted hours of inattention and sloth and disrespect that they had passed in the drill-room. What would they not have given to have lived them over again. With what shame they remembered their careless gestures, their inattentive indifference to the reading of the law, in the very presence of the king before whose open glory they now fell humbled and undone. If they had only believed; if they had only reflected.

It needed not that the troops should be drilled and marshalled before the eye of the attentive, all-seeing king. One glance down their ranks would have told the story to an eye less wise than his. The

bowed heads, the stammering lips, the faltering steps of some, and the clear, bright look of the upturned faces of the others, that seemed already to have caught the glory shining from the throne, marked who had earned his favor, and who had scorned to earn it.

And, in the glory of that place, their perfected love had cast out fear; their eyes grew accustomed to the brightness, their feeble, childish pulses beat with a new strength and vigor; what had been begun in weakness they could now pursue with more than human power. They had begun to serve him with fear and trembling; they would go on serving him through all eternity with certain joy and still increasing love.

And out of his presence, out of the sight of their happy comrades, the wretch-

ed loiterers were driven. With no guides, no leaders now, but drawn on by their doom, they left the splendor of the royal court and crept trembling away into the darkness and chill that was falling without, and, numb and hopeless, wandered through the dismal night that never changed to day with them.







WILLY COLLINS.



WILLY COLLINS.



WILLY'S so cross, there's no sitting near him," muttered Johnny Otley, in great disgust, slamming down the lid of his desk, and thrusting out both elbows as he bent over his book. Willy tried to keep from crying as he withdrew out of the reach of the tattered elbow entrenching on his desk, and leaned against the wall (his was the corner seat), and held his spelling-book up before his face, and didn't say a word as long as he could stand it. But he couldn't stand it

long. Leaning against the wall made his shoulder ache, and sitting on the edge of the chair made his lame hip ache, and his head had been aching so all day he hadn't learned his lesson; and he knew he should be kept in; and altogether he was so wretched he had to give up; and upon the low, monotonous buzz of the school-room there rose a distinct sob. The children dropped their books and looked around to see where the sound came from.

"Why, Willy!" cried Mrs. Johnson, getting up and going over to his corner, "why, what's the matter with you; why are you crying, child?"

Now poor little Willy didn't exactly know why he was crying, except that he couldn't help it; and as Johnny Otley's outrage on his feelings had been the drop that had made his cup of wretchedness.

overflow, he naturally felt as if that was the whole cause of his trouble; and, after a moment of sobbing, stammered out:

“John—Johnny’s ugly to me.”

“John,” Mrs. Johnson said, very severely, “I am ashamed of you if you are unkind to a poor lame boy like Willy, who can’t defend himself. I should think you would be gentle to him, and do everything to help him.”

Now Johnny, in the main, was a very good-natured boy; and except that he was so well and strong and loud that he almost drove his little neighbor wild with his spirits and his restlessness, he was never particularly unkind to him—indeed, till to-day, had rather supposed that he had done enough for him, to make him very grateful. But Willy had been extremely trying all day; could neither sit still nor let anybody

else move; could not bear a word said to him, and had fretted at nothing, so Johnny thought; and at last he had been provoked into pushing him off his desk in the very questionable way described above. Johnny, with much spirit, blazed out into a defence of his conduct; denied emphatically the "ugliness" he was accused of, and darted many angry glances at his accuser. Willy sobbed afresh; several of the children, with officious zeal, entered their testimony on the subject, which, as uncalled-for as it was undesirable, added much to the disturbance; and Mrs. Johnson, in despair, was fain to cry "hush," and taking Willy by the hand, to lead him over to her desk and try to ascertain, by a confidential talk with him, what was the true state of the case.

But Willy was in just that condition of

mind through which it is hardest to sift any, disputed truth. He was so worked up and intensely nervous that he could do nothing more satisfactory than to sob and protest incoherently about Johnny's cruel usage; and Mrs. Johnson at length had to give up all idea of finding out who was in the wrong, and to give to Willy the benefit of the doubt existing in her mind. She saw that he was at least sick and nervous enough to require very gentle treatment; so she said:

"Well, Willy, you may go home. I know you're tired. Here's your cap and your crutch. You needn't stay for the singing and afternoon service."

"I don't want to go," sobbed Willy. "I want to stay to the singing."

"Oh, you little perverse," thought Mrs. Johnson.

"Why, Willy," she said aloud, "it's only just three o'clock, and Mr. Sutherland doesn't come till half-past, and church doesn't begin till four. You'll have an hour and a half to wait, if you don't go now."

Willy shook his head. "I don't want to go home."

"Well, then, you may go out and sit in the church till Mr. Sutherland comes, or you may go out and play till then. Just as you please. Here is your crutch."

Willy looked rather bewildered as he grasped his crutch and took his cap in his hand. Where should he go? He didn't care. One of the girls opened the door for him, so he went out at it instead of going through the other door into the church; and the children heard the thump of his crutch moving slowly down the alley that led out into the street.

It was a soft, warm day early in April; the Tuesday in Passion Week. It had been a cold, dreary Lent, and the mild weather had come suddenly and debilitatingly. Little Willy felt as if his life and strength had all gone with the strong winter weather; he felt so languid and miserable, he only wanted to lie down and cry. The sky was so blue and bright it made his eyes ache to look up at it; the sounds of the street, when he got out into it, were so dreadful, that he wished himself back again into the quiet alley, where the grey walls of the church stretched up as far as he could see, and where the sounds from the outside world came in muffled and mercifully dulled. He stood leaning on his crutch by the church gate, looking listlessly out into the street, when a troop of boys came shouting past from the great school

below. Willy naturally shrank back from their approach, and tried to push the gate shut before they reached him; he had an instinctive dread of big boys and of boys who wore nice clothes and looked like rich people's children. Even when they did not molest him, they had a hateful way of looking down at him, and taking in his tattered clothes and unfortunate deformity. He always knew "for certain" they were turning round to look back at him, even when he did not turn his head to see; they always did; and it made him hot all over, and weak and sick with apprehension, when he saw them coming towards him.

The crowd of boys, however, had some other fun in view to-day; they did not take much notice of the cripple. Only one, a great bully and notorious coward, peered over at him, and made a horrid face, and

then ran yelping on and vaulted over the nearest post, and waited for his comrades to come up, thinking probably he had done enough to show the little invalid what boys with two strong legs have it in their power to do.

Now, the thing of being looked at is not a killing thing; and a "horrid face" is more unbecoming to the maker than injurious to the one at whom the face is made, under ordinary circumstances. But Willy's circumstances, perhaps, were not ordinary circumstances; his nerves, at least, were not ordinary nerves; and for several minutes after the boys ran past, he stood leaning against the railing, too sick and weak to go home, or to go back into the alley even.

"Why, my little boy, what's the matter? What are you doing out of school?" Mr Sutherland said, coming in at the gate.

Willy started, for he had not seen him coming, and hung his head and stammered some inaudible reply.

"What is it?" said the clergyman, laying his hand kindly on his head, and stooping down to listen. "Mrs. Johnson told you you might go home? Well, why didn't you go, then?"

"I didn't want to," Willy whispered, hanging his head still lower.

Mr. Sutherland thought he had never before heard of a child who would not accept a holiday; and contrasted, in his mind, little Willy hanging around the church gate listlessly, with the whoop and shout with which he used to hail his emancipation from the school-room, and the quick way in which he was wont to dispatch the distance between that point and home. "But perhaps poor Willy's home is differ-

ent from the one that attracted me so strongly," he thought, looking down at the little cripple's heavy eyes and flushed cheeks.

"You're too tired to stand any longer. Come with me, won't you?" Willy said, "Yes, sir," and took his hand, and followed him into the vestibule.

"Will you come with me into the school-room, or will you go and sit in the church?" asked Mr. Sutherland.

"I'd rather go into the church," said Willy.

Mr. Sutherland opened the church door, and let him pass in; then closed it and went himself into the vestry-room.

How still and solemn the church was! The roar of the street, and all the hateful city sounds, in that silent sanctuary, were heard only as a faint and distant hum. And a soft, mellow light shone in through

the rich windows, not glaring and bright like the sunshine outside, but so subdued and soothing, Willy's aching eyes were grateful for the change the moment he came in. Ah! it was better than all the brightness outside for a sad little heart like his. He loved every stone in that church; he felt more at home in it than anywhere else on earth. It was his city of refuge, his haven of rest; the only place where he was sure of being let alone; the only place where he would neither be jostled nor worried nor bullied. He often came early to school, long before service began, for the sake of sitting there alone, looking at the pictures in Mrs. Johnson's prayer-book, or spelling out the text around the font, or more frequently leaning dreamily back against the cushions, and gazing up at the great north window, and wondering faintly

whether God made it, or whether people made it, and whether they didn't get it out of "Revelation," if they did.

If anybody had asked Willy suddenly who wrote the Book of Revelation, or whether it was in the Old Testament or the New, he could not probably have done anything more satisfactory than to stammer and blunder, and look as if he wanted to cry; for he was very far from being a bright boy, and understanding quickly what was taught him. He had spent too much of his short life moaning and tossing with pain, to have made much progress in his studies; and his over-excit-able imagination and over-sensitive nerves retarded rather than aided the development of his intellect.

"He is such a trying child to manage, sir," said Mrs. Johnson to the clergyman.

“He’s too cross for anything,” muttered his companions.

“Yes, I know it,” thought the young deacon. “And yet, for all that, I take strangely to the boy. I think I like him better than all the rest of the children put together, strong and handsome and happy as most of them seem. I must know more of him. I must see where he lives.”

Mr. Sutherland had come into the parish only a month before, and was but just getting acquainted with his duties. He had taken them up in such earnest, however, very prudent people said he would use himself up upon them before many years were over; he would find that burning the candle of life at both ends was a very doubtful policy. Perhaps because the extinction of that candle suggested no terror to his mind, the young clergyman

did not heed their warnings, and worked on with unfainting spirit and undying devotion. Two services a day, two sermons a week, an hour every afternoon in the parish school, personal and diligent visiting of and care for the poor of the congregation, left him little spare time or strength, or interest to spend on the world that condemned him; and though, at the end of that long Lent, his cheek was paler, his eye heavier, and his step slower, than if he had followed the counsels of worldly wise and prudent people, he had gained perhaps as much upon them as they thought he had lost. The fasting, which their wisdom rejected, was "angels' food" to his soul; the time that they looked upon as wasted was enriching him with a knowledge and a clearness of soul that nothing but personal ministry among

Christ's poor can give ; the talents that seemed to them thrown away, were spent upon the very work that his Master came to work, and which His servants should not dare despise ; nor will they despise its rewards in that day when the Lord makes up His jewels. .

It did not seem to them as worthy and effective an investment of time, to spend an hour in the school-room teaching the children to sing, and telling them the sad story of Passion Week, as to pass that hour before a great and silent crowd, using the eloquence with which he had been gifted, to the glory of God and the advancement of Christianity ; as well as to the glory of his own intellect and the advancement of himself. But as the souls of the children were placed in his charge, and the souls of the crowd had many ministers, perhaps he did

as wisely in foregoing the probable glory, and the possible snare, and accepting silently the lowest work as the meetest work for him.

Mrs. Johnson thought it was a very pretty sight to see the young minister with the children around him; and she tied her bonnet-strings rather slowly and went home rather reluctantly in the afternoon when he came to take her place. They never sang with so much spirit as when he led them, and they never were so quiet as when he told them stories. Why were they so different with her, thought good commonplace Mrs. Johnson. Why, but that the eloquence that would have fired the sensation sermon, fired the children's story, in its way, and made it so much more striking than Mrs. Johnson's story, as the sermon would have been more strik-

ing than the sermon of the Reverend Dr Drawl.

When the bell began to ring for afternoon service, Mr. Sutherland left the children, and put on his surplice; then calling them around him again, he knelt down and read a preparatory prayer, and, sobered, and in order when the bell stopped, they followed him into the church.

The congregation were assembled, the children had taken their seats, and Mr. Sutherland was just entering the chancel, when, glancing down, he saw Willy lying fast asleep on the cold stone pavement, with his head on the chancel step. The bright red spot on his cheek, and his heavy abandoned, weary attitude, told plainly enough that it would be a fatal rest to him if it were a much longer rest; and shrinking only a second from the wonder of the

congregation, the young man stooped down, and lifting the sleeping child in his arms, carried him over to the transept where the children sat, and laid him down so tenderly on the cushions that he did not wake. It was a very simple act of charity, very simply done; but there was something in the doing of it that struck a chord in the heart of every one that saw it; a chord deeper down and truer than the curiosity-chord, and the conventional chord that threatened to vibrate at the unusual sight; and a great many people said, as they went out of church: "Who is the poor little cripple? How did he come to be asleep on the chancel steps?"

And several kind ladies lingered, wishing to see him when he came out; but Willy, waking much bewildered as the children rose from their knees, and cover-

ed with confusion when they told him what had happened, seized his crutch, and the moment Mr. Sutherland left the chancel, hurried down the aisle and out the furthest door. Mr. Sutherland was somewhat disappointed when he came out of the vestry-room to find him gone; but resolving to follow him in the course of an hour, he dismissed the children, and went to read the Evening Lessons to a bedridden old woman in a remote part of the rather extended parish.

When he had accomplished his task, and received the half-querulous thanks of the exacting old woman, he referred to his memorandum-book for the number of his little protégé's house, and started in search of it. It proved to be a long way off, through tangled and narrow streets, quite unfamiliar to him; full of squalid

children, shameless women, brutal men; full of the thousand sickening sights and "dreary noises" of a great city's by-ways and alleys.

"What boots it gathering one lost leaf

Out of yon sere and withered heap?"

he thought, disheartened and weary, as the littleness of his own power and the vastness of the work around him came into his mind.

"—So much to do,

So little done, such things to be."

It required all his faith not to turn away in despair from what was so stupendous and so overwhelming. But then, again, out of all this multitude, if he saved one soul, might it not, in the just sight of Him who made it, be a work worth his whole life; how much more, the self-denial and

discouragement and sadness of an hour. He must be content with doing the little God put it in his power to do; the burden of what he had not power to do did not rest on him.

It was almost dusk when he paused before the number he was in search of. It was a tenement-house, with a narrow, dark door that swung to with a bang, as a thick-set, ill-dressed man stepped out into the street.

"Can you tell me whether there is a family named Collins living in this house?" asked Mr. Sutherland.

"Well, I expect there is," said the man, with an insolent look at the unmistakably clerical dress of the inquirer.

"Then can you tell me what floor I can find them on?" said Mr. Sutherland, with just enough sharpness in his voice to

indicate the man under the clergyman, and to recall his hearer to a more respectful bearing.

“You won’t go amiss if you go up till you can’t go no further,” returned the man in an improved tone, moving off. By which Mr. Sutherland inferred that the Collins family lived on the top floor of the building, and accordingly he entered it; and the bad-tempered door banged shut upon him in its ill-mannered way; and he began the ascent of the narrow stairs in total darkness. Stumbling up that crazy staircase in broad day would have been uncertain and unpleasant work; for all the light that ever came upon it, came from the snappish door below, or the capricious opening of the dark little rooms on the successive floors; but stumbling up it in the dusky twilight of an early spring even-

ing, was just as far from pleasant as was possible. The baluster shook as he laid his hand upon it; the steps creaked ominously as he advanced; the atmosphere was close and stifling; low sounds of people moving and talking within the closed rooms met his ear; but no door opened, and no ray of light helped him on.

“I don’t blame Willy for liking the church best,” he thought, as on the third floor he stopped to recover breath. The man’s general direction, “to go till he could go no further,” induced him to persevere; and groping along, he ascertained that the baluster took another winding, and went up another pair of stairs. Just at the foot of them, however, he stopped suddenly, for a low moaning struck his ear. Some one, from the sound, must be lying

on the steps, not many feet from where he stood.

"Who is it," he said, pausing. "Is anything the matter?"

No answer, however, but a continued crying. By this time he knew it was a child's voice; and softening his own to suit it, he repeated his inquiries, and listened very attentively for the reply.

Nothing in the way of a reply came, however; only a half fretful, half despairing reiteration of, "Mother, mother, mother!"

"Shall I go and call her?" said Mr. Sutherland. "Do you want her to come to you?"

A sobbing, "Yes, I want her; I've been a wantin' her all this time," sounded so like poor little Willy's pain-pitched voice, that he exclaimed:

"Why, Willy! Is it Willy?"

"I want mother; I want her right away."

"But why don't you go up-stairs, my little man? Does your mother live up-stairs?"

"I can't get up there; I'm so tired; my leg hurts so; I've been a callin' her, and a callin' her—and she won't come."

"She don't hear you, Willy; I'll carry you up to her; shan't I?"

At that moment a door beside them opened, and a dim light showed Willy lying with his head on his arms, about half-way up the stairs.

"What's the wean chaffin' about," said the plump Scotchwoman, who had opened the door, after a moment's pause of curious staring at the clergyman's prompt measures. 'Ah, but he's a' used to childer! How

douce he hauds him!" she added, in admiration; then in answer to his questions, she confirmed the intelligence of his first informant, and stood gaping after him as he went up the stairs.

"Another pair?" he asked softly of Willy, and there was a sob in the affirmative from the head on his shoulder. "Which door?" he asked again, when they had reached the last landing-place. And Willy indicated with a languid hand and choked voice the door in the rear.

"There, my man, we're home at last!" he said in a cheerful tone, as he knocked at the door; but what a hollow, ghastly sound the word home had in that connection. Could it be possible this was home to any one? There came no answer, so he knocked again. Again none, and he raised the latch of the door and pushed it open.

"Mother! I've been a callin' you this ever such a time," murmured Willy, raising up his head as the light appeared. That light showed a strange scene.

The room was a low, scantily furnished, but tolerably neat one. There was a stove in it, and a deal table and a bed. In the only chair—a broken rocking-chair—a baby was tied, whose ghastly white face and heavy eyes gave miserable pathos to its constant wailing. It stretched out its tiny lean arms to the new-comers, and welcomed Willy home with a cry that went to Mr. Sutherland's heart. Some one was lying on the bed, a woman apparently; and a little girl, standing on a chair beside it, was stooping over her with a perplexed and frightened look. The child was not more than five years old, very much like Willy, but healthier and prettier. There was a candle

burning on the shelf above that she had evidently just climbed up to light.

“Oh,” said the little girl, with a half-deprecating, alarmed look towards the clergyman, as she leaned over the bed, “I don’t know what ails mother; I’ve been a good girl all day; I’ve been quiet all day long, and rocked baby, and swept up the hearth, and haven’t cried a time, and she won’t speak to me; she lies there a lookin’ at the window, and she won’t speak a word to me—mother!”

And the child pulled her sleeve again, and looked with fear into her rigid face. Mr. Sutherland put Willy down quickly beside the baby and approached the bed.

“My little girl,” he said, soothingly, “I am so glad you have been good. I don’t believe your mother’s angry with you. How long is it since she talked to you?”

"I don't know," the child said, beginning to cry. "This ever such a time. Take me away; I'm so tired."

"Yes, I'll take you away, poor baby," he murmured, turning with a chill of horror from the touch of the icy hand upon the coverlet, and taking the terrified child in his arms. Her teeth were chattering, and her eyes were shining with the unnatural excitement of her dreadful vigil. How many hours she had been watching beside her dead mother, it was impossible to tell—not less than three or four—perhaps since morning.

"What's the matter with you now, Ellie, that you're cryin' so," faltered Willy, trying to make his way across the room, but stumbling and nearly falling in his uncertainty and alarm.

"Wait, Willy," said Mr. Sutherland; "don't go to the bed; come with me a

moment. Come down for a little while to that good Scotchwoman's room, and I will tell you what makes Ellie cry. Come, I know you will do as I ask you."

He extended his hand to the child; but with a vehement gesture he refused it, and turned towards the bed.

"Let me go to mother," he said, almost in a whisper, with a face perfectly bloodless and terror-struck; "let me go; what makes her lie so still? Oh, I *will* speak to her; I will go to her. Oh, why won't she wake up—mother!"

But shrinking terrified from the touch of her hand, burying his face in the coverlet, the child broke into violent sobs. Ellie renewed her cries at this, and clung around Mr. Sutherland's neck, and begged him to take her away.

"Yes, if Willy will only come," he said,

but feeling very hopeless about his coming, save by main force. He was in a perfect ecstasy of terror and grief—sobbing, catching his breath, shaking hysterically all through his little frame. “It will kill him,” thought the clergyman, infinitely distressed, remembering the feverish and excited state he had so lately been in, and his extreme fragility at all times. He tried to put Ellie down, but she clung to him vehemently, and only cried the more. And the shrill, plaintive moan of the miserable baby in the chair, mixing with this scarcely more intelligent, but more violent grief, seemed to him the most dreary wail of orphanhood he had ever heard. He pressed his hand for a moment before his eyes, then sinking down on a chair beside the bed, he put Ellie on his knee, and leaning forward, passed one arm round Willy’s shoulder.

"My boy," he said, "is this the first time you have ever seen any dead person, any body out of which the soul or life had gone away?"

The child shook his head and sobbed out something unintelligibly, of which the clergyman could only catch, "Father—last summer—"

"Then," he said, "if you saw *him* dead, you know, I suppose, that your mother cannot hear you speak, or see you any more than he could, after the life had gone away from him. Now, I know you are dreadfully unhappy to think you cannot make her hear, nor see her rise and smile again. And I do not wonder that you cry so hard. We all cry when God takes those we love away from us, and for a while we feel very lonesome and miserable without them; but God takes care that

we do not feel so always. By and by He begins to make us think how much better off they are than when they were here, and how soon we shall go to them in the pleasant place where He has put them; and then we begin to wonder that we cried so at first. Ah! my poor little Willy," the young man said with a strange thrill of tenderness and pathos in his voice, "you are not the first who has refused comfort, and cried on. Would you ever think, Willy; that I, grown man as I am, had ever cried like you, only more hopelessly and more desperately? That only a year ago, I had sobbed just as you are sobbing now, and thought I should never be happy again? Would you believe it if I told you all about it?"

The boy subdued the violence of his grief for a moment, and seemed to listen.

"Come to my knee and I will tell you."

He suffered the clergyman to draw him towards him, and his sobs grew gradually fainter as he became absorbed in listening; and Ellie, the tears standing on her cheeks, looked wondering and silent up into his face.

“You thought it was a long way home this afternoon, did you not, Willy; it seemed as if you would never, never come in sight of the house you wanted most to see? Well, it was a longer way *I* had to go, one weary night that I am going to tell you about; and I was more tired than you were, even. I had been travelling all day, since morning light; and now, I found, it was growing dark and there was a long way yet to go, a mile and more, along a dreary, lonely shore, where the waves were beating up, and over which the wind was sweeping cold and sharp. Sometimes it

came so strong it took my breath away and I could hardly struggle on against it. I had almost lost my courage and gone back to wait for morning to come before I crossed the beach; when passing around the foot of the high cliffs I had just reached, I caught the glimmer of a light. Ah! children, think how glad I felt; for that light streamed from the windows of a cottage that was more than home to me. I did not mind the wind, nor the spray, nor the waves after that. I forgot I had been tired, or had thought of going back; you don't know how much shorter the way seemed to be. And when the light was just above me, and I sprang up the rocks and reached out my hand to lift the latchet of the little gate, and the dog came bounding down to meet me, and the door opened to receive me, I am sure I thought

I was safely through the darkness and the storm and the weariness, and that only happiness waited for me within. But oh! my children, God's angels had been there before me, and had taken the soul of her I loved best in that home away—my darling mother, and left only her still, pale body, that could not speak to me nor answer me. She could not welcome me, nor kiss me, nor look at me—she was dead! and Willy, I cried as bitterly at her bedside as you have cried to-night—or as ever you will cry while you live. God help you! But it didn't last always; I learned to think more about the place she'd gone to than the place she'd left."

"Where had she gone to?" Ellie asked.

"Where *your* mother has gone, we trust, my little girl; to that quiet, holy Paradise the Bible tells us of, where there isn't any

trouble or pain, and where it is all peace and pleasure; and they're waiting there for us. They love us just the same, and we must be careful to do always right, so that we may go and be with them in that 'blessed home,' when God calls us to meet them. They are so happy, you see, we must not pain them by doing anything that's wrong. We'd better always be thinking of that—"

"But didn't she ever come back?" murmured Willy, who had wistfully waited for that hope.

"No, child, she never came back; but I am going to her, and that is far better, as you'll think by and by."

"But I can't wait," he began hysterically to sob again; "I want mother; I want her right away."

Another burst of grief seemed inevita-

ble; but Mr. Sutherland, following up the influence he had gained, at length won the children to comply with his desires, and let him carry them down-stairs. He went with them directly to the Scotchwoman's door; and having amazed her beyond expression by depositing them on the bed, he called her to follow him back into the hall, and there told her of the sad scene he had found up-stairs. No cautions, however, could stifle the lively expressions of her astonishment and condolence, which instantly brought half a dozen of their fellow-lodgers into council, and they eagerly hurried up to the chamber of death. Their loud lamentations and most inconsiderate expressions of astonishment made the young pastor doubly thankful he had succeeded in getting the children out of hearing before they were told of the

calamity. It was long before he could subdue their wonder and speculation enough to obtain from them any particulars of the circumstances and former history of the bereaved little family.

Very meagre accounts of their mode of life, however, could their fellow-lodgers give. They had come there to live some eighteen months before; it was understood they had moved in from the country, and to all appearance the parents were a well-to-do and hard-working pair. They mixed little with their neighbors in the house, however; and it was only known from casual circumstances that, in the course of a few months, times had grown less prosperous with them, and work had failed. Then came sickness and pinching distress, and then the father died. Poor Mrs. Collins had struggled on, still keep-

ing aloof from the rest of the lodgers, and still keeping up an appearance of decency whenever she went abroad, or sent her children out. Of late she had been ill, they acknowledged to have known; but never having been encouraged to offer their assistance, they had not supposed it needed then; indeed, it was not difficult to see, a sort of suppressed hostility had existed between the reserved countrywoman and her fellow-lodgers, and Mr. Sutherland was quite prepared for hearing many insinuations to her discredit. But to do the women justice, they did not have the heart to carry their petty jealousies and suspicions beyond the boundary of death. They acknowledged, with some remorse, they knew no ill of her; the only thing they had against her was, she felt herself too good to mix with them, and kept her children

mewed up in her room rather than let them play with those about the house. She was decent and peaceable; they hadn't anything against her but her pride. And ah! they murmured, with doleful and wondering glances towards the bed, there was the end of all of it. She little thought eighteen months ago she would die in a strange garret, without a friendly hand to close her eyes or to hear her dying words.

"The poor bairn watched by her all day," said the Scotchwoman, brushing away a tear. "Think o' that, and she not five years auld."

"But had she no relatives in the city; no one upon whom she could have called?"

No; the women had good authority about that; for at the time her husband

died, she had told Mrs. Lesly, who went in to see her, that she had no friends within a thousand miles, and no kin at all to whom she had a right to look for help.

"Then what is to become of these babies?" Mr. Sutherland exclaimed.

The woman muttered something about the Almshouse, and the city being obliged to provide for them; but thinking, with a shudder, of such care for poor Willy's sensitive nerves, the young clergyman said quickly:

"I think it will not be necessary to apply to the public charity just yet. Is there no one among you who will take charge of them for a few days, till something can be decided upon?"

The women looked doubtfully from one to the other, and did not make any direct answer to the question, only muttered

something about having their hands full of their own children, and not having the time to spare to look after three babies that wanted so much done for them as these of Mrs. Collins did. Evidently they did not understand the young man meant to pay them liberally for their board; and their coldness and inhospitality struck him with so much disgust, he resolved he would not make them any more explicit offer. "If they have not humanity enough to shelter the poor orphans till their mother is buried, they are not fit guardians for them at any time, and I will not bribe them to be Christians. There must be some one else found to take care of them."

Nothing strikes a person of habitual and extended charity with so much pain as contact with selfishness and calculation; and the young minister, perhaps, did not

make sufficient allowance for the weary, toilsome lives of those to whom he had appealed. They had, many of them, a daily struggle to fill their own children's hungry mouths; and were worn down, past tenderness and gentleness, by the grinding, laborious cares pressing constantly upon them. They were ignorant, too, in a great degree, of the elevating and cheering message of the Gospel, which softens and enlarges the hearts alike of rich and poor; and, in a moment of more deliberation, Mr. Sutherland would probably have remembered their slowness of charity had much to excuse it. But now he was intent only on getting the poor babies into some more generous and kindly atmosphere, and could not pause to show their faults to them, or to excuse them to himself.

"Then there is no objection," he said,

“to my taking them with me? The boy belongs to my school, and the woman probably was a member of the church of which I now have charge; so that I do not see any one has a nearer claim to them.”

No one, certainly, the women all agreed; there was considerable alacrity in the response, and Mr. Sutherland had less admiration for them than ever. Mrs. Lesly, the Scotchwoman, struck perhaps with some compunction at imposing all on him, who was more a stranger to the poor friendless woman than themselves, said she would see that all was done that was necessary that night, and that she would watch beside the corpse if some one of the others would stay with her. There were many voices eager in acquiescence; and Mr. Sutherland, handing some money to Mrs. Lesly, told her he would come in the

morning and attend to whatever else was necessary.

“The gude young men!” she murmured, following him down-stairs. Her lad, Sandy by name and by complexion, was dispatched to call a carriage, while his mother bundled the little orphans up in whatever remnants of garments she could find about their desolate apartment, and overwhelmed them with lamentations and caresses. The baby mercifully had fallen asleep; so that when the carriage came, Mrs. Lesly took it down, and laid it, a limp, inanimate bundle, on a pillow upon the forward seat, while Mr. Sutherland following, with Willy in his arms and Ellie by the hand, got in and shut the door.

“Where shall I go, sir?” coachee asked, with his hand upon the latch.

“Aye, that’s the question; where, in-

deed!" thought Mr. Sutherland, with an inward groan, but audibly he said: "Wait a moment, my good man," and with great appearance of composure took out his memorandum-book and turned over the leaves in the desperate hope of lighting on something that would guide him. His house-keeper might manage one, nay, possibly, the two elder children; but the baby was not at all in her line, and the thought of keeping it over night would, he was certain, quite upset her. Besides, poor Willy wanted instant and discriminating care; every glance at him added to the young clergyman's uneasiness. There was not any one, among his congregation, upon whose assistance he could surely count in such a case as this. Many were still strangers to him; and among the few whom he reviewed as possible coadjutors,

there were some who had sick children of their own, and others who had neither strength nor experience sufficient for the undertaking; some who had large heart, but little house-room; and a few who had plenty of house-room, but whose hearts, he judged, he might find less commodious.

In the meanwhile time pressed; the coachman's face, by the light of the street lamp under which he stood, showed signs of wonder and a slight impatience.

"I don't want to shake his faith in me as a sane man," thought Mr. Sutherland; "but if I do not hurry, he'll soon conclude I don't know where I want to go any more than the poor baby on the pillow does."

A gleam of hope, however, at that moment lighted up his face; the little memorandum-book had proved a faithful counsellor. On a stray leaf there was written

an address that set all his doubts at rest, and he turned to coachee with such animation, and gave him the direction with such a changed expression, that the man's mind misgave him about the propriety of following it. As he assumed his place on the box, he shook his head, muttering:

"Something wrong; something wrong, it's plain. I must keep my eye upon him. He'll be flying out o' the window, mor'n likely, and I shan't see a penny o' my fare."

The suspected lunatic, meantime, was endeavoring to inspire his young friends with some of his own good spirits.

"In a few minutes, children," he said encouragingly, "we shall be in such a comfortable place, where Willy and Ellie shall each have a little white bed, and where there will be a kind nurse to take care of

poor little baby. And you must be hungry, too; you have had no supper?"

No, nor any dinner either, for the matter of that; but the excitement of driving, the wonder of the change, was sufficient to sustain and pacify them for the present; and when the carriage stopped, they were a most silent little trio. Mr. Sutherland left them for a few moments in the care of the driver, who looked strangely unwilling to be left, and went up the steps and rang the bell. He disappeared behind the door, which closed after him; but in a very short time reappeared again, accompanied by a lady in a white cap and grey dress, who took the baby kindly in her arms and went back again into the house. Mr. Sutherland paid the driver, who seemed much relieved, and drove off as if he were glad to be well through with the undertaking; then taking

Ellie in his arms, and leading Willy, he ascended the steps and went into the house. The lady was already unwrapping the baby from its many and tattered envelopes, and looking at it pitifully.

“Poor child!” she said, with a sigh. “And this is the little girl?”

Ellie hung back frightened, and began to feel desolate and strange. But the lady was so kind and gentle, they soon grew reconciled. They were taken into a room where some twenty other children were at supper; and queer and strange as Ellie felt, she yet succeeded in eating more than Willy.

Poor Willy! He had a dreadful night, and the kind lady watched beside him till nearly morning. His limbs ached so; his head throbbed so; he was so burning hot! And the next day, when Mr. Sutherland came, he found his little favorite in an

alarming state—perfectly delirious, and with a high fever. For several weeks it seemed uncertain whether the poor boy would ever be brought out of it. The most careful nursing and the most skilful doctoring alone could have conquered such an attack as his. But in his new home he had both; and when at length he rallied, and began again to look about him, and notice where he was, he asked for Ellie and for “mother.”

Poor boy! It cost the kind lady who had nursed him many a pang to say the truth to him; and his silent crying, with his face down in the pillow, made her heart ache more than the most vehement burst of sorrow could have done. At last she said:

“Shall I bring you Ellie and the baby?”

But Willy shook his head; he did not

want to see them now. The next day when he sat up in his bed for a little while, again the lady said the same, and Willy nodded.

When Ellie came in, in her brown gingham frock and long blue apron, looking rosy and healthy as a country girl, Willy hardly knew her. And the baby, though still a peaked and sad-faced thing, was wonderfully changed since the night Mr. Sutherland found her tied up in the rocking-chair. The hospital had saved her, as it is saving many others; and poor little Willy had to thank it, under Heaven, for his continued life.

Mr. Sutherland, from the time that he found it such a welcome home for his poor little deserted flock, devoted himself to its enlargement and extension. Some time of every day he gave to it; and Willy and Ellie looked for him with longing every

day. Willy learned to love the hospital chapel very much, but the dear old church was still his home; and sometimes on Sunday afternoons, Mr. Sutherland would get leave for him to come down there with Ellie, and sit in the pew with the children. It made him feel strange and sad to look at the great north window that he had gazed at so wistfully in the dark, unhappy time that seemed so long ago; but he loved it still, and never forgot it through all his life.

Healthy, happy little Ellie had not so much to forget as her brother had; but both of them soon lost the recollection, as far as it was really painful, of their miserable infancy, and became contented, simple-hearted, and religious children, under the safe, cheerful, and holy influences of their new home.



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